SOME CONSIDERATIONS TOUCHING The Style OF THE H. SCRIPTURES;

EXTRACTED

From several parts of a Discourse, concerning divers

Particulars belonging to the Bible,

Written divers Years since to a Friend:

By the Honorable

ROBERT BOYLE, Esq;

The Third Edition.

מהנמלצו לחכי אמרתך מדבש

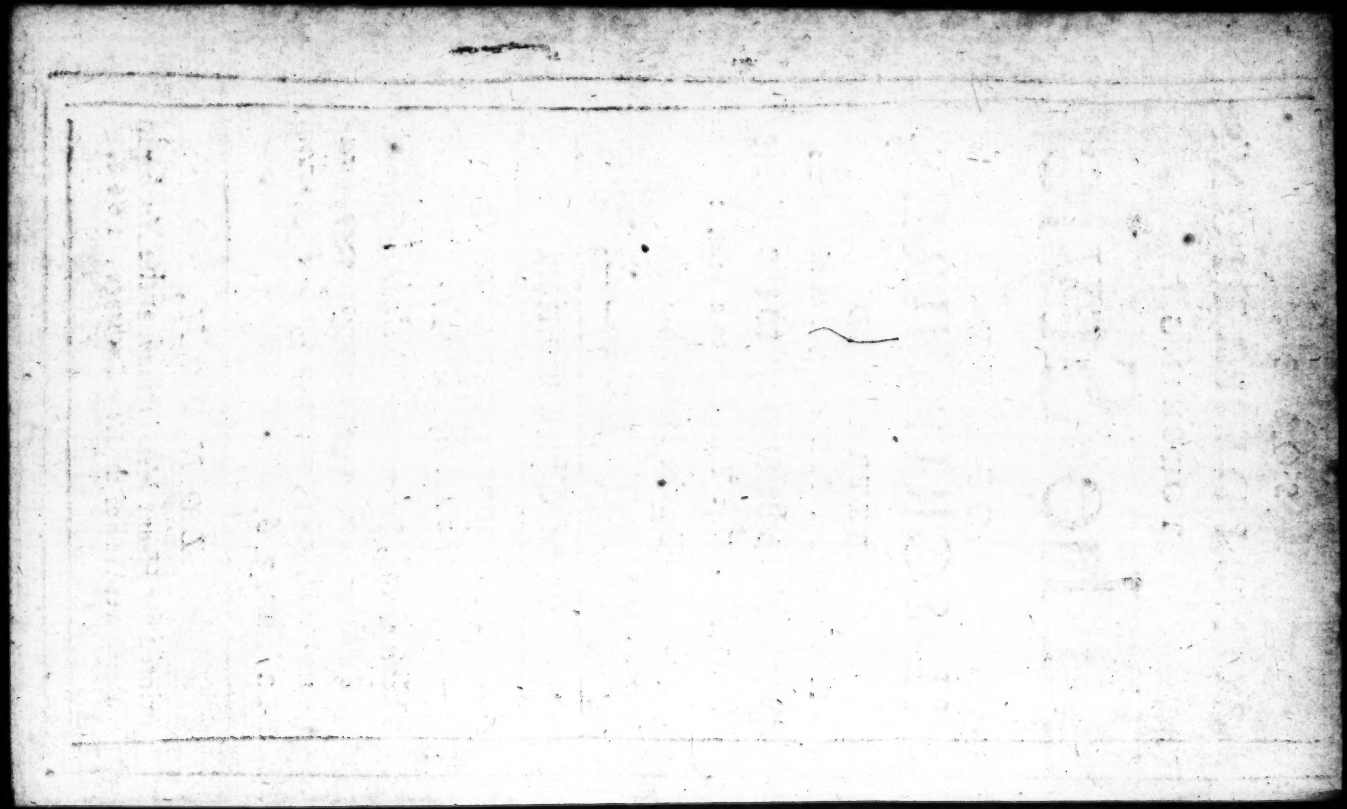
PSAL. 119. 103. לפי

Πᾶσα γραφὴ, θεόπνευστος, καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἔλεγχον, πρὸς ἐπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ

2 Tim. 3. 6.

LONDON,

Printed for *Henry Herringman*, at the *Anchor* in the Lower Walk of the *New-Exchange*, 1663.



TO THE EARL OF *ORRERY*,

One of the Lords *Juſtices* of the Kingdom of *Ireland*, Lord *Preſident* of the Province of *Mounſter*, &c.

MY DEAREST BROTHER,

THat Sacred Book which furniſhes our Preachers both with their Texts and a Great Part of their Diſcourſes

on them, being the Subject about which I am to entertain You, I preſume it will not much ſurprize You, if what I ſhall Say in repreſenting to You ſome Conſiderations on That book, reliſh more of a Sermon than of a Letter of Complement. And indeed it would ſo little become a Perſon that writes Of my Subject, and With my Deſign, to Startle at the very Beginning ſuch Readers as he deſires to Find or Make Devout, with any thing written in the Wonted ſtrain of *Epiſtles Dedicatory*: and the Nature of the Treatiſe, to which this

this Paper is premis'd, does allow so Little of that, where-of Custom, on such Occasions, is wont to challenge so Much; that I should let this Book come forth Undedicated, were it not that the Motives that induce me to Address it to You, are of such a Nature, that I hope that meerly by a plain Representation of them, I may Comply with what makes me look upon this Dedication as a Duty, without Departing from the serious Design I propos'd to my self in the Dedicated Book. Although then such Readers,

as having perus'd Your Writings, ſhall caſt their Eyes on mine, will I fear think it a bold Preſumption in me to addreſs Diſcourſes concerning a Style to a Perſon ſo much and ſo juſtly applauded for His; Yet as ſeveral Reaſons engage me to preſent You theſe Thoughts, ſo the fear of paſſing for Preſumptuous for ſo doing, obliges me to Mention ſome of thoſe Reaſons. Whereof the firſt ſhall be, That your Kindneſs For, and your Reſemblance in many particulars To, *Theophilus*, makes me often Phanſie that I am yet Enter-

Entertaining that Rare Perſon when I write on the behalf of the Scripture unto You. Who may alſo, I preſume, remember (which is my Second Reaſon) that when ſeven or eight Years ago, I ventur'd to ſhew You Divers of theſe Papers, with others (that I yet ſuppreſs) belonging to the ſame Treatiſe, You were pleas'd to give me ſuch a Permiſsion, that in caſe they ſhould ever be made Publick, I might Addreſs what I had written at your Friend's deſire particularly to You, as I took for an Engagement, if not a

Command. So that how unlike ſoever the following Treatiſe is to that Beſt of Books it would Recommend: yet ſince You have thus made the Preſent Addreſs a Duty, I muſt elect rather to Betray to You my Weakneſſes, than not Manifeſt my Obedience. And to theſe, I muſt ſubjoyn this Third Conſideration, (more prevalent perhaps with me than Both the former) that (as a homely Digger may ſhew a Man a Rich Mine) whatever the Book may be that I Preſent You, that which I Recommend to You

is a Matchleſs one; and will, if ſo Diſcerning a Reader ſhall bring as much Aſsiduity as Capacity to diſcover its Prerogatives, appear ſo Worthy of what I have ſaid of it, that I allow my ſelf a Hope, the following Conſiderations will prove ſo Happy as either to Endear the Scripture to You, or, (by not appearing Such as ſo Good a Subject would ſuggeſt to a Good Pen,) Invite You to ſubſtitute Better in their Rooms. And in either of theſe Caſes, I ſhall not have Cauſe to Repent of having Written them; ſince they will prove Serviceable either

to

to the Book or to the Man to whom I moſt deſire to be ſo. And this Hope I muſt again own to be the Chief Inducement of my venturing to preſent a Fragment of an Unpoliſh'd Treatiſe to a Perſon that is wont to Write ſuch as are ſo Eloquent and Accompliſh'd in their Kind. For though ſevere and not incompetent Judges of Compoſures of this nature, have been pleas'd to give theſe Papers no diſapproving Character; Yet ſince I preſent them to You, the Chief thing I dare pretend to in them, is only (as the Singing

ing rare Songs Ill, is wont by an unheeded Indignation, to Engage the Poſſeſſors of rare Voices to make them admir'd;) by diſcloſing my Zeal and Inſufficiencies, to Invite You to Reſcue ſo Excellent a Theme as the Scripture, from ſo Dull a Pen as Mine, by employing your Happy one in its Defence and Celebration; Or, (if your Partiality ſhould make you place any value on ſo Unfiniſh'd a Piece) to convince you how capable of Rare Thoughts my Subject is, by its being able to furniſh ſo Barren a brain as Mine with

Accep-

Acceptable ones. And certainly, your Pen having no Leſs ſerv'd your Fame, than either your Sword, or your Employments (how high ſoever;) it could not but bring the Scripture more than a Few of the moſt Witty and Illuſtrious Votaries, if That Eloquence were Employ'd to Enamor them of that Divine Book, that hath made them ſo generally in Love with your Celebrated *Partheniſſa.* I will not repreſent to you ſo pious an Exerciſe of your Rhetorick and Muſe, as a Duty, for fear of Leſſening the Diſ-intereſs'dneſs

reſs'dneſs of the Employment I recommend to You, by implying, that You cannot Decline it without a Fault. I ſhall rather invite your Pen to Prefer it ſelf To, and Grace Religious Subjects, by aſſuring You, that as there are none more Worthy of your Pen, ſo there are Few Pens more likely to Succeed upon ſome of them than Yours. Thoſe handſome Eſſayes your Muſe hath charm'd me with upon ſome Parts of the Bible, have given me Longings equally great and juſt, to ſee her, by a Devotedneſs to ſuch Heavenly

Themes,

Themes, as Happy in the Choice of her Subjects, as ſhe is wont to be in the Embelliſhing of them, and to have her make that her Chief Employment, wherein 'tis Beſt to Do, what ſhe doth alwaies, ſucceed Well. And as with Burning-glaſſes, though we cannot make the Sun ſhine, yet when he Doth vouchſafe us his Heavenly Beams, we can with thoſe Glaſſes both Encreaſe Light and Heat, and Carry and Settle them here and there as we ſee cauſe; ſo though with Wit and Parts, their Poſſeſſors could never have been

been able to Engage God to *ſend forth his Light and his Truth*; yet now that Revelation Hath diſclos'd them, and now he hath been pleas'd to make them Radiate in his Heavenly Word, men may with Knowledge and Eloquence happily Recollect thoſe Scatter'd divine Beams, and Uniting them in Particular Subjects, and Kindling with them the Topicks proper to Warm and Work on our Affections, may powerfully Illuſtrate Truths and Enflame Zeal. Towards the latter end of the enſuing Papers you will find ſomething

ſaid

said to perswade our *Theophilus*, that the choicest Poetical and Rhetorical Ornaments, may without Injury to their Lustre, be Employ'd about such Subjects as may be chosen in the Scripture: But more and Better things to the same purpose, have since been said by our Ingenious Friend Mr. *Cowley*, who not only has employ'd much Eloquence to perswade that Truth in his Preface to his Poems, but has in One of them given a Noble Example, and consequently a Proof of it. I need not tell You, I mean his *Davideis*, a

Work

Work and Way of Writing, which ſince your Muſe has already thought fit to Celebrate, I hope ſhe will hereafter think fit to Imitate. And this I wiſh the more earneſtly, becauſe it hath been obſerv'd, that Secular Perſons of Quality (of whom I have elſewhere occaſion to name Divers) are generally much Succeſsfuller in Writing of Religion, (to Gentlemen eſpecially) than Scholaſticks or Men in Orders; not only becauſe their Style and way of Writing is obſerv'd to have in it ſome pleaſing *Je ne ſcay*

quoy, ſomething of Eaſie Genuine and Handſom that's peculiar to It, (differing from Regular Eloquence as a *Good Meen* doth from Beauty) and Reliſhes of the native Gracefulneſs wont to attend on what they Do or Say; but becauſe their Writings attract More Readers by the Author's Conſpicuouſneſs, and make Deeper Impreſsions in them, by being ſuppos'd more Diſ-intereſs'd, and look'd upon not as Suggeſted by their Profeſsion or Self-ends, but at the Sincere Dictates of their Unbridled ſouls. For my part, though

I am not ſo happy as to be much concern'd in all the precedent Conſiderations; yet thoſe that you will find towards the End of the longeſt Digreſsion in the following Diſcourſe, have been ſo Prevalent with me, that though ſome very Fair and very Perſwaſive Perſons (whom perhaps I need not name to You) did, when I was writing the annexed Treatiſe, labour to divert my Pen to ſome more Youthful and more Faſhionable Compoſures, by flattering me with a perſwaſion, that in thoſe Attempts

of that Nature I had formerly Occaſion to make, I was not altogether unlucky; Yet I, that would bring my ſelf to prefer to a whole Wood of Bayes, the leaſt Sprigg of the Tree of Life, am inclin'd to think, that a Chriſtian may poſsibly find a higher Satisfaction in Perſwading men to Pay praiſes to the Scripture, than in Receiving them from all the World beſides; and would think it more Deſirable, (were the Choice His) to Diſcountenance prophane Wit, than live Unrival'd in the Glory of it. And though

for

for my own particular, ſuch a Temper be, I fear, more my Aim than my Attainment; yet when I write of Sacred ſubjects, I had rather a Book of mine ſhould reſemble the Moon, which, though ſhe be but Small, leſs Elevated, and full of Imperfections, lends yet an Uſeful Light to Men, and produces here and there a Motion that obeys a Heavenly Influence; than a Star of the Firſt Magnitude, which though more High, more Vaſt, and more Flawleſs, ſhines only bright enough to make it Self Conſpicuous. Pardon me therefore, My

Deareſt Brother, if my Concern for Religion and You have made me Importunate in appearing ſo eagerly Solicitous to ſee your applauded Pen Sanctify'd by, and Adorn the Beſt of Subjects: to Engage You to which, if the enſuing Diſcourſe may but be ſo fortunate as in any Degree, or upon any Score, to contribute any thing, I ſhall either not eſteem it a Trifle, or not Regret the having written it. For it is not alwayes ſo Deſpicable a piece of ſervice as may be imagin'd, to Endear by particular Conſiderations, an Excellent Book, (and how much

much more that Incomparable Book the Scripture?) to a Perſon capable of Diſcovering and making Uſe of the Rare things it contains. To which purpoſe I might offer you divers more ſerious Inſtances, but ſhall only at preſent (a little to Divert you,) take this occaſion to tell you, that *Ben. Johnſon* paſſionately complaining to a learned Acquaintance of mine, that a Man of the long Robe, whom his Wit had rais'd to great Dignities and Power, had Refus'd to grant him ſome very Valuable thing he had Begg'd of him,

concluded with ſaying with an upbraiding Tone and Geſture to my Friend; *Why the ungrateful Wretch knows very well, that before he came to Preferment, I was the Man that made him Reliſh* Horace. But to return to the following Book, Though I hope you do not think me ſo Vain as to doubt that it is ſuffer'd to come abroad with Imperfection enough to need my Excuſes and your Pardon; Yet ſince the Treatiſe it ſelf is ſo unmeaſurably Prolix (for a Part of an Eſſay,) it were unfit the Addreſs of it ſhould be ſo too; and give your

your Patience as great an Exerciſe upon the ſcore of its Quantity, as upon that of its Quality: And therefore, referring you for what I might ſay of Apologetical, to what I ſay to the Reader; I ſhall only adde, That though in *Epiſtles Dedicatory*, Cuſtom hath made it a kind of Rudeneſs not to Expatiate in Praiſes and Conclude with Complements; and though what You have Acted and what You have Written might ſupply a Perſon leſs concern'd than I, with Matter for a Panegyrical Addreſs; yet ſince I told You at the Begin-

Beginning of this Letter, I ſhould rather Preach than Complement in it, and ſince Praiſes fit to be aſcrib'd to my Lord of *Orrery*, would be unfit to be aſcrib'd him by his Brother; And ſince alſo, 'twere ſcarce more Uneaſie for me to make You any other than Seeming Complements, than 'twere Preſumptuous to addreſs Any at all to ſo great a Maſter in the Art; I ſhall both decline Praiſes, which not to ſeem Flatteries where You are Not known, would perhaps be thought Detractions where you Are; and venture to Conclude this

this Letter as I have Begun and Continu'd it, without Complement, upon the ſcore of being Without, if not Above any,

My Deareſt Brother,

Your moſt Affectionate Brother, and moſt Faithful Humble Servant,

ROBERT BOYLE.

TO

TO

TO THE READER.

The Author having with the Following Diſcourſe ſent the Publiſher a Letter, which contains almoſt All the Particulars that would be Requiſite to be taken Notice of in a Preface, it is thought fit to Premiſe inſtead of it, the Letter it ſelf, as it was Addreſs'd to Mr. *P. P. A. G. F. I.* (to favour whoſe Modeſty, he is not now more Openly nam'd.)

SIR,

You will perhaps think it Strange, that a Perſon Obſequious enough to Thoſe he Loves, ſhould be able to Hold out ſo Long againſt the Importunity of two ſuch Powerful Sollicitors, as my Willingneſs to Own a Veneration for the Scripture, and my Unwillingneſs to Deny You any thing. But if you will give me leave to Acquaint You with the Conſi-

derations

derations that have hitherto Diſſwaded me from the Publication of the Papers You Preſs for, You will I preſume rather marvel at my Reſolving at laſt to Comply with Your Deſires, than that I have been ſomewhat long Conteſting, before I could take up ſo Oppos'd a Reſolution. Firſt then, the Treatiſe of which the Papers You Deſire make a Part, was Written nine or ten Years ago, when my Green Youth made me very Unripe for a Task of that Nature; whoſe Difficulty Requires, as well as its Worth Deſerves, that it ſhould be handl'd by a Perſon in whom Nature, Education, and Time have happily Match'd a Senile Maturity of Judgment with a Youthful Vigour of Phanſie. Next, the Diſcourſe I have mention'd, being Written to a Private Friend who put me upon that Task, I not onely had a Theme of Anothers Chooſing Impos'd upon me, for which he was pleas'd to think me much more Fit than I had reaſon to think my ſelf, but was by the Freedom allowable among Friends tempted to vent and expreſs my Thoughts with more Negligence, than were proper to be made uſe of in a Solemn Diſcourſe intended for Publick View. The contrary of which were yet very requiſite for a Perſon, who though he have by I know not what Unhappy Fate, been caſt upon the learning Divers Languages, has yet too great a Concern for the Knowledge of Things to be a diligent or ſollitous Conſiderer of Words; and ſo was more fit to write almoſt of any thing, than of a Style, or of Matters Rhetorical;

Be-

Beſides, that my Eſſay touching the Scripture, having not been all Written in one Countrey, but partly in England, partly in Another Kingdom, and partly too on Ship-board, 'twere ſtrange if in what I Writ, there did not appear much of Unevenneſs, and if it did not Betray the Unleiſuredneſs, and Relliſh of the Unſettl'dneſs of the Wandering Author; who by thus rambling, was reduc'd for Want of a Library to comply with the Requeſt of his Friend, who was more deſirous to receive from the Author, Apples and Pears growing in his own Orchard, than Orenges and Lemons fetch'd from foreign Parts: whereby I was condemn'd not to Enrich my Diſcourſe with what I might have Borrow'd of Real and Valuable from the Eloquent Compoſures of more happy Pens. But theſe, Sir, are not all the Determents that Oppos'd my Obeying You; For beſides theſe Diſadvantages with which the Diſcourſe it ſelf was Written; that Part of it You demand, muſt appear with a Peculiar as well as Great Diſadvantage: for in an Entire and Continu'd Diſcourſe the ſeveral Parts that compoſe it, do mutually afford Light and Confirmation to each other: And therefore, though whatſoever I here preſent You touching the Style of the Scripture had been Written altogether in ſome One place of the Diſcourſe, whereof it makes a Part; Yet I could not Diſmember it from the reſt without a great deal of Injury, as well to It, as to the reſt of the Treatiſe. But this is not the Worſt of my Caſe: For though I did in

One

One part of my Eſſay of the Scripture more Profeſſedly apply my ſelf to the Conſideration of its Style; yet, becauſe divers things were Interwoven even in this diſtinct Part, which were not ſo fit for Publick View; And becauſe that in divers of the other Parts of my Eſſay, I had here and there frequently enough, Occaſion to ſay ſomething of the Same Theme, I have been Oblig'd, that I might Obey You, not onely to Diſmember, but to Mangle the Treatiſe You perus'd, cutting out with a Pair of Scizzers here a whole ſide, there half, and in another place perhaps a Quarter of one, as I found in the other parts of my Diſcourſe, Longer or Shorter Paſſages, that appear'd to relate to the Style of the Scripture, that I might give you at once All thoſe Parts of my Eſſay, which ſeem'd to concern that Subject. And though I have here and there by Dictating to an Amanuenſis *inſerted ſome Lines or Words, to make the looſe Papers leſs Incoherent, where I thought it eaſie to be done, yet in many others I have onely prefix'd a ſhort black Line, to the Incoherent Paſſages, if I found they could not be connected with thoſe whereunto I have joyn'd them, without ſuch Circumlocution as either the Narrowneſs of the Paper would not permit, or my preſent Diſtractions (which you know are not a Few) and the Weakneſs of my Eyes would not allow of. For to compleat my Unfitneſs to obey You with any thing of Accurateneſs, I muſt to obey you at all, do it, both when I have other Compoſures in the Preſs, and*

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when the Diſtemper in my Eyes makes me ſo far from Daring to Tranſcribe the Papers I ſend You, that I might Alter them according to the Exigency of Your Deſign in them, that I durſt not ſo much as read them over but with Anothers Eyes. To which I muſt add, that beſides all theſe Diſadvantages I have already mentioned, I cannot but foretell that the following Diſcourſe may prove obnoxious to the Cenſures of differing ſorts of Readers, and particularly to thoſe of Courtiers, for too Neglected, and thoſe of Criticks, for too Spruce a Dreſs. By all which I preſume You will be eaſily induc'd to believe with me, that I cannot Expoſe the Papers You deſire ſo much to their Diſadvantage and my Own, without ſome Exerciſe of Self-Denial: Since without needing much Foreſight I may well Apprehend, that I ſhall hereby hazard the Loſs of the moſt Part of whatever little Reputation in this Nature any of my former Moral or Devout Compoſures may among Favourable Readers have procur'd me.

But by this time, Sir, I ſuppoſe not only that You have left Wondering at my making ſome Difficulty to put the Annexed Papers into Your hands, but that I owe You and my other Friends an Account why I now Conſent to a Compliance with Deſires which ſuch Powerful Conſiderations would diſſwade my Aſſenting to.

My firſt Inducement then to what I do, is the favourable Character that You, and ſome other very

Competent Judges have been pleas'd to give me of these Papers, and especially Your thereupon pressing their Publication upon me as a Duty whereto I stand oblig'd to those Many Readers whom you would have me think likely to be Benefited thereby. For in such Cases where Knowing and Sober Persons think there is a great Probability of a Discourses doing Good, it is not impossible but that an Unwillingness to have it Publish'd, may not so much proceed out of Modesty, as from some Secret Pride, almost as unjustifiable, as if a Physitian should refuse to come abroad upon an Urgent Occasion, because he has not his Best Cloaths on, or is not Carefully Dress'd. And therefore when I incline to make with you a Case of Conscience of the Matter, I think my self Oblig'd, what ever my Private Apprehensions may be of the Success, to do my Duty, and leave Events to the Wise and Soveraign Disposer of them. 'Tis not, that I have the Vanity to expect that I shall convert Obstinate and Resolv'd Cavillers, nor much Instruct the Great Clerks: But since I have not yet met with such a Discourse as I intended mine to be; And since the greater part of the things I have written in it will not perhaps be elsewhere met with; I hope that what I have said, may not be Useless to those who have consider'd the Subject I Treat of Less attentively than I have done, and may, if not Procure a Veneration for the Scripture in those that are Altogether Indispos'd to it, yet at least Increase, or Confirm it in those that have al-

ready

ready entertain'd it; and furnish such Devout Persons with something to Alledge on the Scriptures Behalf, who are better furnish'd with Affections than with Arguments for it. And I the Less Scruple to allow my self such a Hope, because you have been pleas'd to make not onely to Me, but to Others such a Mention of the following Papers, that after Your Preference of them to the other Pieces of Devotion You have yet seen of mine (without excepting that Discourse of Seraphick Love, which yet has had the luck to be so favourably Entertain'd by Readers of all sorts,) I shall confess to You, that as Some of them do now appear very much Dislocated and Mangl'd, so Others were Penn'd with more Care than any other of my Writings about Matters Theological. And indeed I conceiv'd my self Oblig'd, in point of Gratitude as well as Duty, to speak as Advantageously as I could of the Scripture, because if I may without Vanity make such an Acknowledgment, I am sensible I have been Benefited by it, and might have been much more so, if I had been as dispos'd to Learn as the matchless Book is qualifi'd to Teach: And I Confess to You also, that since the Physiological Writings I have been induc'd to publish of late, and the sort of Studies to which (for Reasons to be told You at a fitter Opportunity) I seem at present to be wholly addicted to; make many look upon me as a Naturalist. And since some Persons, as well Phylosophers as Physicians, have either Faultily, or at least indiscreetly given many

Men occaſion to think that thoſe that being ſpeculatively Studious of Natures Myſteries, depart, as I often do, from the vulgar Peripatetick Philoſophy, and eſpecially if they ſeem to favour that which explicates the Phænomena *of Nature by Atoms, are inclin'd to Atheiſm, or at leaſt to an unconcern'dneſs for any Particular Religion. Since I ſay theſe things are ſo, I was not unwilling to lay hold of this Opportunity to give a Publick Teſtimony, whereby ſuch as do not know me may be Satisfied, (For I preſume all that do know me are ſo,) that, if I be a Naturaliſt, 'tis poſſible to be ſo, without being an Atheiſt, or of Kin to it. And that the Study of the Works of Nature has not made me either Disbelieve the Author of them, or Deny his Providence, or ſo much as Diſeſteem his Word, which Deſerves our Reſpect upon ſeveral Accounts, and eſpecially that of its being the Grand Inſtrument of Conveying to us the Truths and Myſteries of the Chriſtian Religion. My Embracing of which I know not why I ſhould be Aſham'd to own, ſince I think I can to a Competent & Unprepoſſeſs'd Judge give a Rational Account of my ſo doing.*

To all this I might ſubjoyn ſome Apologies, which might perhaps ſerve to Prevent, or withdraw the Cenſures of ſome ſorts of Readers.

For to Criticks and Philologers I could repreſent, Partly, that I have not a little Impoveriſh'd my Diſcourſe by making uſe of Books to ſhun the Repetition of what I found Obvious already. Partly, that when I wrote the Eſſay of which the enſuing Treatiſe is a

Piece,

Piece, I had thoughts of annexing to it Annotations, wherein I hop'd to Illustrate, and by particular Instances to Exemplifie, divers of those things which should appear to require it; or which else the Reader might suspect I have Slightly consider'd, because I seem to make but a Transient Mention of them. And partly too that I ignor'd not the stricter Interpretations given by Modern Criticks to divers Texts by me alledg'd, but that (not having Opportunity to Criticize) I was content to use them in their Receiv'd, or Obvious sense: and have sometimes Employ'd them but by way of Allusion, or as Arguments Ad hominem *(wherein some of my Readers are like to Acquiesce, though I do not) and sometimes rather us'd them to Express than Prove my Thoughts. And indeed in these Popular Discourses which are not Written. For, nor to be Examin'd As, Regular Disputations, Men use not so much to look whether Every thing be a strict Truth; as whether it be Proper to perswade or impress the Truths they would inculcate: and especially in Compositures of the Nature of this of Mine, Men have been rarely censur'd for being sometimes even Indulgent to the Exigencies of their Themes. Those that require more of Method than they will here find, may be Advertis'd that much of this Scribble being design'd to serve Particular Acquaintances of Mine, 'twas fit it should insist on those Points They were Concern'd in: and that (consequently) much of the Seeming Desultorines of my Method,*

and Frequency of my Rambling Excurſions have been but Intentional & Charitable Digreſsions out of my Way, to bring ſome wandring Friends into theirs, and may Cloſely enough purſue my Intentions, even when they ſeem moſt to deviate from my Theme. And as for the Longer Excurſions which either You, or other Judicious Friends would needs have me leave here, and there, I have for the Eaſe of my Perſuſers Annex'd to them ſome Marks whereby they may be taken Notice of to be Digreſsions, that as I Submit to their Judgment, who think they may be Uſeful to ſome Readers, ſo I may Comply with my own Unwillingneſs, to let them be Troubleſome to others; who by this means have an Opportunity to Paſs by if they pleaſe ſuch as they ſhall not expect to find themſelves (either upon their Own ſcore, or that of their Acquaintances) Concern'd in. To thoſe of the Wits, who happning to be Diſregarders of the Scripture may find themſelves upon that Account us'd here with any ſhew of Slighting or Aſperity, I may add to what I have already ſaid in the Papers themſelves, that, It hath been, but as we Pinch, and caſt cold Water on the Faces of Perſons in a Swoon, to bring them out of it to themſelves again: I having done it with as harmleſs Intentions, as thoſe of the Angel Acts 12.7. &c. *(mention'd in the* Acts*) when he ſtruck* Peter *on the ſide, not to Hurt him, but to Awake him, Lead him the way out of the Priſon he was bound in, and Reſcue him from Imminent Death. And if that will not ſatisfie ſome of the Leaſt Judicious, or*

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the Most Desperate (For others I expect to find Better Affected or More Moderate) I am willing to leave the Intelligent and Pious to Judge between us; assuring those that are so much more jealous of their own Honour than of Gods, that as I Writ to Reclaim them, not to Deprive them of the Repute of Wits, or Share it with them, so I shall not overmuch Deplore the being by them Deny'd a Title, to which I have as little Pretension as Right. And (to dispatch) I might add, That Orators may not unjustly bear with some Rudenesses in the Style of a Person that Professes not Rhetorick, and Writes of a Subject that needs Few of her Ornaments, and Rejects Many, as Indecencies misbecoming its Majesty: and that Severer Divines may safely Pardon some Smoothness in a Discourse Written Chiefly for Gentlemen, who would scarce be fond of Truth in every Dress, by a Gentleman who fear'd it might misbecome a Person of his Youth and Quality Studiously to Decline a fashionable Style. And if any Divine should Censure me for Intruding upon his Profession, and handling my Subject Less skilfully than he would have done; I will not Urge that to Write Well on this Subject is a Task, which he that shall try, will perhaps find far Less easie than one would imagine; but I shall rather tell him, that I hope I may obtain his Pardon, by assuring him, that I shall be as little angry to be Rectifi'd in my Mistakes, as to be shown the Way when I am Out of it, and as little trou-

bl'd to have this Diſcourſe, that but skirmiſhes with Lazineſs and Prophaneneſs, Surpaſs'd by another on the Same Subject, as to ſee another Embracer of the ſame Quarrel come in with a freſh Regiment, to aſſiſt me againſt a Formidable Enemy in a Conflict I were Engag'd in but with a Troop, or b'ing Cannon againſt a Fortreſs, I had but Sakers to Batter with. Yes, I ſhall be glad if my dim ſhort-liv'd Match but ſerve to light anothers Brighter Torch, and ſhall think it a Happineſs, to have Contributed, though but thus Occaſionally, towards the Elucidation, or Splendour of the Scripture, And conſonantly to this Temper I would beſeech any Reader, that may ſo much Want Learning as to need ſuch a Requeſt, not to Meaſure what can be ſaid in the Defence and Celebration of the Scriptures Style, by what hath in the Following Diſcourſe been Trac'd by the callow Pen of a Travelling Layman. For I profeſs Ingenuouſly, that there can as little be an Unwelcomer as an Unjuſter Complement plac'd upon me, than to miſtake any thing that I am Able to ſay, and much leſs what I Have ſaid for the Beſt that can be ſaid upon ſuch a Subject. Nor is it my leaſt Encouragement to conſent to the Publication of ſuch Incompleat Writings, that the Conſiderations already Intimated will Probably keep my Readers from doing the Scripture, and their own Judgment, ſo great an Injury.

But I ſee I have ſo far Tranſgreſs'd the Bounds of a Letter, that if I add any thing more of Apology,

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it must be for having been so Prolix already. Wherefore there scarce remains any thing for me, but to Mind You, that since your Perswasions have so much Contributed to my Exposing the following Tract, Incompleat as it is, Your own credit is somewhat concern'd in it as well as Mine. And therefore I hope You will have a care that there be no Faults of the Printer added to those of the Author, which do so little need Additional Blemishes. And especially that there pass no Mistakes of the Punctation. For in such Composures as this, if the Stops be Omitted, or Misplac'd, it does not onely Lessen the Gracefulness of what is said, but oftentimes quite Spoil the Sense. And if by this Care of Yours (which Your Affection, both for the Subject, and the Writer makes me Confident of) and by the Authority of Your Approbation, I find these Imperfect Considerations to be so Favourably receiv'd as to deserve Another Edition; it will perhaps invite me to put them forth Enlarg'd, and Recruited with what I may meet with pertinent to their Subject in such other Papers of mine Concerning the Scripture, as I had not yet the Conveniency to get into mine own hands and look over. However, though I pretend not here to Answer all Objections against the Style of the Scriptures; yet, as I hope, I have been so happy as to Answer Some of them, and Weaken Most of the rest: So if others that are More able will but Employ themselves as Earnestly in so Useful a Work, there is great hope that some Answering this Objection, another

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that; and a third another, they may at length be all of them Satisfactorily reply'd to. And in the mean time I shall think my Labour Richly Recompenc'd, if they either Procure, or Establish a Veneration for the Scripture in any of my Readers, or do at least Encourage those that are qualifi'd for a far more prosperous making such an Attempt, to Undertake it, by shewing those of them that Know me, what were Easie for Them to do, whilest they see what has been done even by me, whom sure they will not think to be Half so much an Orator, as I hope so uneasie a Proof of his Obedience will make You think him.

Sir,

Your Affectionate Friend

and humble Servant

ROBERT BOYLE.

SOME

SOME CONSIDERATIONS Touching the STYLE Of the H. SCRIPTURES.

THese things, *Dear Theophilus*, being thus dispatch'd, I suppose we may now seasonably proceed to consider the *Style* of the *Scripture*: A Subject that will as well require as deserve some Time and much Attention; in regard that diverse witty men who freely acknowledge the Authority of the Scripture take exceptions at it's Style, and by those and their own Reputation divert many from studying, or so much as perusing, those Sacred Writings; thereby at once giving men injurious and irreverent thoughts of it, and

and diverting them from allowing the Scripture the best way of justifying it self, and disabusing them. Than which scarce any thing can be more prejudicial to a Book that needs but to be sufficiently understood to be highly venerated. The writings these men criminate, and would keep others from reading, being like that Honey which *Saul*'s rash Adjuration with-held the *Israelites* from eating, which being tasted, not only Gratified the taste, but Enlightned the eyes.

1 Sam. 14. v. 27, 29.

Now those allegations against the Scripture we are to examine being but too various, it will be requisite for us, to consider the Style of it not in the stricter acception, wherein an Authors style is wont to signifie the choice and disposition of his words, but in that larger sense, wherein the word Style comprehends not only the Phraseology, the Tropes and Figures made use of by a Writer, but his Method, his lofty or humbler Character (as Orators speak) his Pathetical or languid, his close or incoherent way of writing, and in a word, almost all the whole manner of an Author's expressing himself.

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Wherefore, though the Title of an Eſſay prefixed to this Treatiſe will I preſume invite you to expect from me rather ſome looſe conſiderations than any full and Methodical diſcourſe concerning the Style of the Scripture; yet I hope you will not think it ſtrange if ſo comprehenſive a Theme make this part of the Eſſay diſproportionate to the others: eſpecially ſince the nature of your commands and that of my deſign oblige me to interweave ſome other things with thoſe that more directly regard the Style of the Scripture, and particularly to lay hold on all opportunities I can diſcreetly take to invite you to ſtudy much and highly to eſteem a Book, which there is no danger you can too much ſtudy, or eſteem too highly.

It has been a comon ſaying among the Antients, that even *Jupiter* could not pleaſe all. But by the Objections I meet with againſt the Scripture, I find that the true God himſelf is not free from the Imputation of his audacious Creatures, who impiouſly preſume to quarrel as well with his Revelations as his Providence, and expreſs no more reverence to what he hath dictated than to what he doth.

doth. For not now to mention what is by Atheists and Antiscripturists alledged to overthrow the Truth and Authority of the Scripture (because it is not here, but elsewhere, that we are to deal with that sort of men) even by some of those that Acknowledge both (for with such onely we have now to reason) there are I know not how many faults found with the Style of the Scripture. For some of them are pleased to say that Book is too obscure, others, that 'tis immethodical, others, that it is contradictory to it self, others, that the neighbouring parts of it are incoherent, others, that 'tis unadorned, others, that it is flat and unaffecting, others, that it abounds with things that are either trivial or impertinent, and also with useless Repetitions. And indeed so many and so various are the faults and imperfections imputed by these men to the Scripture, that my wonder at them would be almost as great as is my trouble, if I did not consider how much it is the Interest of the great Adversary of mankind, and especially of (that choicest part of it) the Church, to depreciate compositures that if duly Reverenced would prove so de-

structive

ſtructive to his Kingdome and Deſigns; and if I did not alſo Remember that (ſuch is the querulous and exceptious nature of men) 'Twas *Cicero* himſelf that obſerved, *Vitari non poſſe Reprehenſionem niſi nihil ſcribendo.* But as Poets and Aſtronomers have fancied among the Celeſtial Lights that adorn the Firmament, Bears, Bulls, Goats, Doggs, Scorpions, and other beaſts; ſo our Adverſaries impute I know not what Imaginary deformities to a Book ennobled by it's Author with many Celeſtial Lights, fit to inſtruct the World, and diſcover to them the wayes of Truth and Bleſſedneſs. Although I ſay this be ſo, yet ſince the miſ-repreſentation made by theſe men of the Bible is not inferiour to that made by Poets and Coſmographers of the Firmament, I hope you will be as little deterred by the moſt diſparaging Imputations from ſtudying the Scripture, as Pilots are by the Name of a Bear given to the moſt Northern Conſtellation, from having their eyes upon the Pole-ſtarr, and ſteering their courſes by it.

And ſince you will eaſily believe that a Perſon ſo averſe from wrangling as I,

is not like to make the disputing with these Censurers of the Scripture-Style any further his design than as the invalidating their Objections conduces to the Reputation of that Sacred Book, I presume you will not think it at all impertinent, if oftentimes I intermix with those things that more directly regard such Objections, other things that seem to tend rather to celebrate than vindicate the Scripture: for in so doing, I hope I shall not alone considerably, though not perhaps so directly, strengthen my answers, by shewing that we justly ascribe to the Scripture Qualities quite opposite to the imperfections imputed to it; but I shall perfectly comply with my main design, which I here declare once for all, is but to engage you to study and value the Scripture, and therefore obliges me to answer Objections onely so far forth as they may look like arguments to dissuade you from prizing and studying it. And because I find not that the Objections to be considered have any great coherence with or dependence on each other, I shall not scruple to mention them, and my Reflections on them, in no other order than that wherein

wherein they ſhall chance to occurr to my thoughts whilſt I am writing.

Of the conſiderations then that I am to lay before you, there are three or four which are of a more general nature, and therefore being ſuch as may each of them be pertinently employed againſt ſeveral of the exceptions taken at the Scriptures ſtyle, it will not be inconvenient to mention them before the reſt.

And in the firſt place it ſhould be conſidered, that thoſe Cavillers at the ſtyle of the Scripture that you and I have hitherto met with, do (for want of skill in the Original) eſpecially in the *Hebrew*, judge of it by the Tranſlations wherein alone they read it. Now ſcarce any but a Linguiſt will imagine how much a Book may loſe of its elegancy, by being read in another tongue than that it was written in, eſpecially if the Languages from which and into which the Verſion is made, be ſo very differing, as are thoſe of the Eaſtern and theſe Weſtern parts of the world. But of this I foreſee an occaſion of ſaying ſomething hereafter, yet at preſent I muſt obſerve to you, that the ſtyle of the Scripture is much more diſad-

vantaged, than that of other Books, by being judged of by Translations. For the Religious and just veneration that the Interpreters of the Bible have had for that Sacred Book, has made them in most places render the *Hebrew* and *Greek* passages so scrupulously word for word, that for fear of not keeping close enough to the sense, they usually care not how much they lose of the Eloquence of the passages they Translate. So that whereas in those Versions of other Books that are made by good Linguists, the Interpreters are wont to take the liberty to recede from the Author's words, and also substitute other Phrases instead of his, that they may express his meaning without injuring his Reputation: in translating the Old Testament Interpreters have not put *Hebrew* Phrases into *Latin* or *English* Phrases, but only into *Latin* or *English* words, and have too often besides, by not sufficiently understanding, or at least considering, the various significations of Words, Particles and Tenses in the Holy Tongue, made many things appear less coherent, or less rational, or less considerable, which by a more free and skilfull rendring of

the Original would not be blemiſhed by any appearance of ſuch imperfection. And though this fault of Interpreters be pardonable enough in them, as carrying much of it's Excuſe in it's Cauſe, yet it cannot but much derogate from the Scripture to appear with peculiar diſadvantages, beſides thoſe many that are common to almoſt all Books by being Tranſlated.

For whereas the Figures of Rhetorick are wont by Orators to be reduced to two Comprehenſive ſorts, and one of thoſe does ſo depend upon the ſound and placing of the words (whence the *Greek* Rhetoricians call ſuch Figures σχήματα λέξεως) that if they be alter'd, though the ſenſe be retained, the figure may vaniſh; this ſort of figures I ſay, which compriſes thoſe that Orators call *Epanados*, *Antanaclaſis*, and a multitude of others, are wont to be loſt in ſuch literal Tranſlations as are ours of the Bible, as I could eaſily ſhew by many inſtances, if I thought it Requiſite.

Beſides, there are in *Hebrew*, as in other Languages, certain appropriated Graces and a peculiar Emphaſis belonging to ſome expreſſions, which muſt neceſſarily be impaired by any

Tranſlation, and are but too often quite loſt in thoſe that adhere too ſcrupulouſly to the words of the Original. And as in a lovely face, though a Painter may well enough expreſs the cheeks and the noſe and lipps, yet there is often ſomething of ſplendor and vivacity in the Eyes which no Pencil can reach to equal: ſo in ſome choice Compoſures, though a skilful Interpreter may happily enough render into his own Language a great part of what he tranſlates, yet there may well be ſome ſhining paſſages, ſome ſparkling and Emphatical expreſſions that he cannot poſſibly repreſent to the life. And this conſideration is more applicable to the Bible and it's Tranſlations, than to other Books, for two particular Reaſons.

For firſt, it is more difficult to tranſlate the *Hebrew* of the Old Teſtament, than if that Book were written in *Syriack* or *Arabick*, or ſome ſuch other Eaſtern Language. Not that the Holy Tongue is much more difficult to be learned than others, but becauſe in the other learned Tongues we know there are commonly variety of Books extant, whereby we may learn the various ſignifications

nifications of Words and Phraſes; whereas the pure *Hebrew* being unhappily loſt, except ſo much of it as remains in the Old Teſtament, out of whoſe Books alone we can but very imperfectly frame a Dictionary and a Language, there are many words, eſpecially the Ἅπαξ λεγόμενα and thoſe that occurr but ſeldom, of which we know but that one Signification, or thoſe few Acceptions wherein we find it us'd in thoſe Texts that we think we clearly underſtand: whereas if we conſider the nature of the Primitive tongue, whoſe words being not numerous, are moſt of them Equivocal enough, and do many of them abound with ſtrangely-different meanings; and if we conſider too how likely it is that the Numerous Conqueſts of *David*, and the Wiſdom, Proſperity, Fleets, and various Commerces of his ſon *Salomon* did both inrich and ſpread the *Hebrew* Language, it cannot but ſeem very probable, that the ſame Word or Phraſe may have had divers other ſignifications than Interpreters have taken notice of, or we are now aware of, ſince we find in the *Chaldee*, *Syriack*, *Arabick*, and other Eaſtern

Tongues, that the *Hebrew* words and Phraſes (a little varyed, according to the nature of thoſe Dialects) have other, and oftentimes very differing ſignifications beſides thoſe that the modern Interpreters of the Bible have aſcribed to them. I ſay the Modern, becauſe the Antient Verſions before, or not long after our Saviour's time, and eſpecially that which we vulgarly call the *Septuagint*'s, do frequently favour our conjecture, by rendring *Hebrew* Words and Phraſes to ſenſes very diſtant from thoſe more received ſignifications in our Texts, when there appears no other ſo probable reaſon of their ſo rendring them, as their believing them capable of ſignifications differing enough from thoſe to which our later Interpreters have thought fit to confine themſelves. The uſe that I would make of this Conſideration may eaſily be conjectured, namely, that 'tis probable that many of thoſe texts whoſe expreſſions, as they are rendred in our Tranſlations, ſeem flat, or improper, or incoherent with the context, would appear much otherwiſe, if we were acquainted with all the ſignifications of Words and Phraſes

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that were known in the times when the *Hebrew* Language flouriſhed, and the Sacred Books were written: It being very likely, that among thoſe various ſignifications ſome one or other would afford a better ſenſe and a more ſignificant & ſinewy expreſsion than we meet with in our Tranſlations, and perhaps would make ſuch paſſages as ſeem flat or uncouth appear Eloquent and Emphatical. Whilſt I am writing this, our *Engliſh* Tongue preſents to my thoughts an Example which may ſeem to illuſtrate much of the foregoing Conſideration: and it is this; That though, as one would eaſily believe, there are but a few forms of ſpeaking which relate to the Birth of Infants, yet there are five or ſix expreſſions concerning that one affair, wherein very peculiar and unwonted notions belong to the Words & Phraſes. For if I ſay that ſuch a Woman has looked every hour theſe 10 days, That yeſterday ſhe cryed out, That ſhe had a quick & eaſy labour, That laſt night ſhe was brought a bed, That now ſhe lyes in, and that it is fit we ſhould remember the Lady in the ſtraw; if, I ſay, I make uſe of any or all of theſe expreſſions, an Engliſh-

man would readily underſtand me; but if I ſhould literally and word for word tranſlate them, I ſay not into *Greek* or *Hebrew*, but into the Languages of our neighbour Nations, *French* or *Italian*, men would not underſtand what I mean: and if a diſcourſe wherein they were employed were tranſlated by an Interpreter only acquainted with the genuine and more obvious ſignification of the *Engliſh* word, it would in ſuch paſſages appear very diſadvantageouſly, and perhaps be thought impertinent or non-ſenſical to a *French* or *Italian* Reader.

But this is not all; for I conſider in the ſecond place, that not only we have loſt diverſe of the ſignifications of many of the *Hebrew* Words and Phraſes, but that we have alſo loſt the means of acquainting our ſelves with a multitude of particulars relating to the Topography, Hiſtory, Rites, Opinions, Factions, Cuſtomes, &c. of the Antient Jews and neighbouring Nations, without the knowledge of which we cannot in the peruſing of Books of ſuch Antiquity as thoſe of the Old Teſtament, and written by and (principally) for Jews, we cannot I ſay but loſe very

very much of that eſteem, delight and reliſh with which we ſhould read very many paſſages if we diſcerned the References and Alluſions that are made in them to thoſe Stories, Proverbs, Opinions, &c. to which ſuch paſſages may well be ſuppoſed to Relate. And this Conjecture will not I preſume appear irrational, if you but conſider how many of the handſomeſt paſſages in *Juvenal*, *Perſius*, *Martial* and diverſe other Latine Writers (not to mention *Heſiod*, *Muſæus*, or other ancienter Greeks) are loſt to ſuch Readers as are unacquainted with the *Roman* Cuſtomes, Government and Stories, nay or are not ſufficiently informed of a great many particular circumſtances relating to the condition of thoſe times, and of diverſe particular perſons pointed at in thoſe Poems; and therefore it is that the later Criticks have been fain to write Comments or at leaſt Notes upon every Page, and in ſome Pages upon almoſt every Line of thoſe Books, to enable the Reader to diſcern the Eloquence and Reliſh the Wit of the Author. And if ſuch Dilucidations be neceſſary to make us value writings that treat of familiar and ſecular affairs,

affairs, and were written in an *European* Language, and in Times and Countries much nearer to ours, how much do you think we muſt loſe of the Elegancy of the Book of *Job*, the Pſalms of *David*, the Song of *Salomon*, and other Sacred compoſures, which not only treat oftentimes of ſublime and ſupernatural Myſteries, but were written in very remote Regions ſo many Ages ago, amidſt Circumſtances to moſt of which we cannot but be great ſtrangers? And thus much for my firſt general Conſideration.

My ſecond is this, That we ſhould carefully diſtinguiſh betwixt what the Scripture it ſelf ſayes, and what is only ſaid in the Scripture. For we muſt not look upon the Bible as an Oration of God to men, or as a Body of Lawes, like our Engliſh Statute-Book, wherein it is the Legiſlator that all the way ſpeaks to the people, but as a Collection of compoſures of very differing ſorts, and written at very diſtant times; and of ſuch compoſures, that though the Holy Men of God (as St. *Peter* calls them) were acted by the Holy Spirit, who both excited and aſſiſted them

them in Penning the Scripture, yet there are many other beſides the Author and the Pen-men introduced ſpeaking there. For beſides the Books of *Joſuah*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*, the four Evangeliſts, the Acts of the Apoſtles, and other parts of Scripture that are evidently Hiſtorical and wont to be ſo called, there are in the other Books many paſſages that deſerve the ſame name, and many others wherein, though they be not meer Narratives of things done, many Sayings and Expreſſions are recorded that either belong not to the Author of the Scripture, or muſt be looked upon as ſuch wherein his Secretaries perſonate others. So that in a conſiderable part of the Scripture, not onely Prophets and Kings, and Prieſts being introduced ſpeaking, but Souldiers, Shepheards, and Women, and ſuch other ſorts of perſons from whom witty or eloquent things are not (eſpecially when they ſpeak *extempore*) to be expected, it would be very injurious to impute to the Scripture any want of Eloquence that may be noted in the Expreſſions of others than it's Author. For though not only in Romances, but in many of

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those that pass for true Histories, the supposed Speakers may be observed to talk as well as the Historian; yet that is but either because the men so introduced were Embassadors, Orators, Generals, or other Eminent men for parts as well as employments, or because the Historian does, as it often happens, give himself the liberty to make Speeches for them, and does not set down what indeed they said, but what he thought fit that such persons on such occasions should have said; whereas the Pen-men of the Scripture, as one of them truly professes, having not followed cunningly-devised Fables in what they have written, have faithfully set down the Sayings as well as Actions they record, without making them rather congruous to the conditions of the Speakers than to the Laws of Truth.

Nor is it onely the style of very many passages of Scripture that may be justified by our second Consideration, but with the same Distinction well applied we may silence some of their malicious Cavils who accuse the Scripture of teaching Vice by the ungodly Sayings and Examples that are here

and

and there to be met with in it. But as the Apoſtle ſaid, that *they are not all Iſrael that are of Iſrael*; ſo may we ſay, that all is not Scripture that is in the Scripture: for many wicked perſons and their perverter Sathan are there introduced, whoſe Sayings the Holy Ghoſt does not adopt, but barely regiſters; nor does the Scripture affirm that what they ſaid was true, but that it is true they ſaid it. And if I had not reduced ſome of theſe Cavillers to confeſs that they never did themſelves read thoſe pieces of the Bible at ſome of whoſe paſſages they cavil, I ſhould much more admire than I do to find them father as confidently as they do all they hear cited from it upon the Enditer of it, as if the Devils ſpeeches were not recorded there, and as if it were requiſite to make a Hiſtory divinely inſpired, that all the Blaſphemies and Crimes it regiſters ſhould be ſo too. As for the Ills recorded in the Scripture, beſides that wicked perſons were neceſſary to exerciſe Gods Children and illuſtrate his providence, and beſides the Allegations commonly made on that ſubject, we may conſider that there being many things to be declined as well as practi- 9. Rom. 6.

practiſed, 'twas fit we ſhould be taught as well, what to avoid, as what to imitate; and the known rocks and ſhelves do as well guide the Sea-men as the Pole-ſtar. Now as we could not be armed againſt the Tempters methods if we ignor'd them; ſo could we never ſafelier nor better learn them than in his Book, who can alone diſcover the wiles and fathom the *depths of Sathan*, and track him through all his windings and (otherwiſe untraceable) Labyrinths, and in that Book where the Antidote is exhibited with the Poyſon, and either mens defeat or victory may teach us at others coſts and without our hazard the true art of that warfare we are all ſo highly concerned in. And as Chymiſts obſerve in the Book of Nature, That thoſe Simples that wear the figure or reſemblance (by them termed Signature) of a diſtemper'd part are Medicinal for that part of that Infirmity whoſe ſignature they bear; ſo in God's other Book the Vicious perſons there mention'd ſtill prove under ſome notion or upon ſome ſcore or other Antidotal againſt the Vices notorious in them, being (to preſent it you alſo in a Scripture Simile) like the Brazen Serpent in the

Rev. 2. 24.

the Wilderneſs ſet up to cure the Poyſon infuſed by thoſe they reſemble. *Whatſoever things were written aforetimes*, ſayes the Apoſtle, *were written for our Inſtruction*. And to make further uſe of our former compariſon, thoſe to whom the Scripture gives the names of Lions, Wolves, Foxes, & other Brutes, by Gods aſſiſtance prove to his Saints as inſtructive Beaſts as doth the Northern Bear unto the wandring Pilot: and as Antiently God fed his Servant *Elias* ſometimes by an Angel, ſometimes by a Woman, and ſometimes too by Ravens; ſo doth he make all perſons in the Bible, whether good or bad or indifferent, ſupply his ſervants with that inſtruction which is the Aliment of Vertue and of Souls, and makes them and their examples contribute to the verification of that paſſage of Saint *Paul*, wherein he ſayes that *all things co-operate for good to them that love God*.

Rom. 15. 4.

Rom. 8. 28.

My third Conſideration is this, That the ſeveral Books of the Bible were written chiefly and primarily to thoſe to whom they were firſt adreſſed, and to their contemporaries, and that yet the Bible not being written for one

one Age or People only, but for the whole people of God, consisting of persons of all Ages, Nations, Sexes, Complexions and Conditions, it was fit it should be written in such a way as that none of all these might be quite excluded from the advantages designed them in it. Therefore were these Sacred Books so wisely as well as graciously temper'd, that their Variety so comprehends the several abilities and dispositions of men, that (as some Pictures seem to have their eyes directly fix'd on every one that looks on them from what part soever of the room he eyes them) there is scarce any frame of spirit a man can be of, or any condition he can be in, to which some passage of Scripture is not as patly applicable as if it were meant for him, or said to him, as *Nathan* once did to *David*, *Thou art the man*. What has been thus observed touching God's design in the contrivance of the Scripture, may assist us to defend the style of a great multitude of it's Texts, and particularly of diverse of those which belong to the five following kinds.

2 *Sam.* 12. v. 7.

And

And first, the several Books that make up the Canon of the Scripture being primarily designed for their use that lived in the times wherein they were divulged, it need be no wonder if each of them contain many things that principally concern the persons that then lived, & be accordingly written in such a way that many of it's passages allude and otherwise relate to particular Times, Places, Persons, Customes, Opinions, Stories, &c. which by our formerly-mentioned want of a good account of such remote Ages and Regions cannot afford us that instruction and satisfaction that those to whom such Books were immediately addressed might easily derive from the perusal of them.

Next, as some portions of Scripture were principally designed for ages very long since past, so some other parts of it, especially those that are yet Prophetick, may probably respect future times much more than ours: and our Posterity may admire what we cannot now relish, because we do not yet understand it. Moreover there being many portions of Scripture, as almost the whole four last Books of *Moses*, where-

in God is introduced as either immediately or mediately giving Laws to his people or his worshippers, I suppose it will not be thought necessary that such parts of Scripture should be Eloquently written, and that the Supreme Legislator of the World, who reckons the greatest Kings amongst his Subjects, should in giving Laws tye himself to those of Rhetorick, the scrupulous observation of which would much derogate from those two Qualities so considerable in Laws, Clearness and Majesty.

Besides, there being a sort of men, of which I hope the number will daily encrease, who have such a desire as St. *Peter* tells us the Angels themselves cherish, to look into the Mysteries of Religion, and are qualified with elevated and comprehensive Intellects to apprehend them in some measure, it is not unfit that to exercise such mens abilities, and to reward their industry, there should be some abstruse Texts of Scripture fitted to the capacities of such speculative wits, and above the reach of vulgar Apprehensions.

1 Pet. 1. 12.

And on the other side, the Omniscient Author of the Scripture foreseeing

ſeeing that it would follow from the condition of mankind that the greateſt part of the members of the Church would be no great Clerks, and many of them very weak or illiterate, it was but ſuitable to his goodneſs that a great many other paſſages of the Books deſigned for them as well as others, ſhould be written in ſuch a plain and familiar way as may befit ſuch Readers, and let them ſee that they were not forgotten or over-looked by him who truly ſayes by the Prophet that all Souls are his. And yet in many even of theſe Texts which ſeem chiefly to have been deſigned to teach the ſimple, Scholars themſelves may find much to learn. For not onely there are ſome paſſages that contain milk for Babes, and others that exhibit ſtrong meat for riper ſtomachs, but oftentimes (as Cows afford both milk and beef) the ſame Texts that Babes may ſuck milk from, ſtrong men may find ſtrong meat in: The Scripture it ſelf in ſome ſenſe fulfilling the promiſe made us in it, that *Habenti dabitur (to him that hath ſhall be given,)* and being like a fire that ſerves moſt men but to warm, and dry themſelves, and dreſs their meat,

Ezech. 18. 4.

but ſerves the skilful Chymiſt to draw Quinteſſences and make Extracts.

I doubt not but you are acquainted as well as I with divers querulous Readers, who very boldly find fault with this variety wherein God hath thought fit to exhibit his Truth and declare his Will in Holy Writ, and preſume to cenſure ſome Texts as too myſterious, very many as too plain. But theſe exceptions at the Oeconomy of the Scripture do commonly proceed from their Pride that make them; for that vice inclining them to fancy that the Bible either was or ought to have been written purpoſely for them, prompts them to make exceptions ſuitable to ſuch a preſumption, and whilſt they look upon their own abilities as the meaſure of all diſcourſes, to call all that tranſcends their apprehenſions Dark, and all that equals it not Trivial. They will be alwayes finding fault with the Holy Ghoſts expreſſions, both where his condeſcenſions make them cleer, and where the ſublimity of the matter leaves them obſcurer; like Batts, whoſe tender eyes love neither day nor night, and are only pleaſed with (what is alone proportioned

portioned to their weak ſight) a Twi-light that is both or neither. But as a skilful Fowler (and the compariſon will be excuſed by thoſe that remember that God in Scripture is ſaid to be preſſed as *a Cart is preſſed that is full of ſheaves*, and the Son of Man to be as *a Thief in the night*) according to the differing natures of his game, ſo contrives and appropriates his ſtratagems, that ſome he catches with light (as Larks with day-nets) ſome with baits (as Pigeons with Peaſe) ſome with frights (as Black-birds with a Sparrow-Hawk or a Low-bell) and ſome he draws in with company (as Ducks and ſuch like ſociable Birds with decoy-Fowl:) ſo God knowing that ſome perſons muſt be wrought upon by Reaſon, others allured by Intereſt, ſome driven in by Terrour, and others again brought in by Imitation, hath by a rare and merciful (if I may ſo call it) ſupplenes of wiſdome ſo varied the Heavenly Doctrine into Ratiocinations, Myſteries, Promiſes, Threats and Examples, that there is not any ſort of people that in the Scripture may not find Religion repreſented in that form they are moſt diſpoſed to receive im-

Amos 1 13.

preſſions from; God therein graciouſly dealing with his Children not unlike
2 King. 4. 34. the Prophet that ſhrunk himſelf into the proportion of the Child he meant to revive. The *geniuſes*, the capacities and the diſpoſitions of men are ſo diſtinct, and oftentimes ſo extravagant, that there is ſcarce a paſſage of Scripture that is not ſuitable or appropriate to ſome of thoſe numberleſs differences of humour the Bible was deſigned for, and in that unimaginable variety of occurrences ſhared amongſt ſuch vaſt multitudes finds not a proper object. And therefore God who (having created them) beſt knows the frame of mens ſpirits, having been pleaſed to match them with proper Texts, I ſhall not quarrel with his vouchſafing to liſp myſteries to thoſe that would be deterred by any other way of expreſſing them, and to qualifie his inſtruments according to the natures he deſigns them to work upon, leſt he ſhould ſay to me with the Houſe-holder in the Goſpel, *Is thine eye Evil, becauſe I am Good?* And ſure it muſt extremely misbecome us to repine at the greatneſs of Gods condeſcenſions, only upon the ſcore of a

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Knowledge or Attainments that we owe to it.

By reflecting upon the three foregoing general Conſiderations, you will, I preſume, eaſily perceive what it is that is pretended to in what I repreſent to you in the behalf of the ſtyle of the Scripture. For you will eaſily gueſs by what I have hitherto told you, I pretend not to prove or aſſert that every Text of Scripture, eſpecially in tranſlations, is embelliſhed with the Ornaments of Rhetorick, but only to ſhew theſe two things, the one, That as there may be drawn from divers things in the Scripture it ſelf (without excluding the ſtyle) conſiderable Arguments of it's having been written or approved by men peculiarly aſſiſted by the Spirit of God; ſo if a man be perſwaded either by theſe intrinſick Arguments (which I may in another paper evince to be no ſlight ones) or by any others, of the Heavenly Origination of the Scripture, if, I ſay, a man be perſwaded of this, he ought not in reaſon by the ſtyle of theſe Books to be kept from diligently ſtudying of them, and highly valuing them. The other (which I add as one evincement of the former) is,

that not only the Scripture is every where written with as much eloquence as the chief Author (whose Omniscience qualified him to judge best in the case) thought fit and expedient for his wise ends in publishing it, but that, as we now have the Sacred Books, especially in their Originals, very many passages of them are so far from being destitute of what even our Western Nations count Eloquence, that they deserve to be Admired for it. And, *Theophilus*, if you please to keep in your eye what I have now told you concerning my Scope in writing, and to bear in your memory the three general Considerations I have premised, I shall need hereafter as often as I have occasion to mention them, only to point at them, and thereby shall excuse you and my self from the unwelcome trouble of many times repeating the same things.

To proceed then to the more particular Objections against the Scripture. The first I shall consider is, That it is obscure. And this I find alledged by two sort of men to two differing purposes; some endeavouring by it to disgrace the Bible, and others only making

making the pretended darkneſs of many of its paſſages an Excuſe for their not ſtudying it.

To the firſt ſort of objectors I anſwer, that it is little leſs than inevitable that many paſſages of the Scripture ſhould ſeem obſcure to us, and that it is but fit that divers others ſhould be ſo too.

For firſt, the Objectors, as I formerly obſerved, reading the Bible but in Tranſlations, are deſtitute of thoſe helps to underſtand the ſenſe of many Paſſages that may be afforded by skill in the Original Languages. Beſides, that even to thoſe that have taken pains to underſtand the Original Tongues, the Genuine ſenſe of divers words and Phraſes is denied by the injury of time, through which (as was already noted) a greater part of the *Hebrew* and *Chaldæan* Tongues have been loſt.

Secondly, Many Texts appear obſcure to thoſe that live in theſe latter times, onely becauſe that by reaſon of the periſhing of thoſe Writings and other Monuments of Antiquity that were contemporary to the Books of the Old Teſtament, we cannot be ſufficiently acquainted with the Hiſtory, the

Laws

Laws and Customes of the *Jewes* and other Nations mentioned in the Scripture, so that it need be no wonder if divers Passages of the Books of *Genesis*, *Josuah*, *Judges*, *Samuel*, the *Kings*, *Hester*, & other Historical Books of the Scripture, as also of the four last Books of *Moses*, are obscure to us, and yet might be very intelligible to those in whose times they were written, and for whose use they were principally designed. As although *Lucius Florus* would in many places appear very obscure to such Readers as know nothing of the *Roman* affairs but by the account given of them in his writings (whence diverse late Criticks have been invited to illustrate him out of other Latine Authors) yet questionless to the *Roman* Readers that lived in his time, or not very long after, his Book was easie enough to be understood. How much the want of other Historians contemporary to the Penmen of the *Old Testament* may make things seem obscure that might by such stories be easily cleered up, we may observe from divers Passages of the New Testament, which can scarce be wel understood without an account of *Herod*'s family, and the changes that happened

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about our Saviours time in *Judæa*, which was sometimes all of it governed by *Herod* the Great that massacred the Children at *Bethlehem*, and sometimes was governed by *Pilate* and other *Roman* Magistrates, and sometimes was so divided that it was as to some parts onely governed by *Herod*'s Descendents under various Titles; the want of the Knowledge of which, and of the several Princes that bore the name of *Herod*, does much puzzle many Readers that are Strangers to *Josephus*. And it seems somewhat strange to many, that Christ should in St. *Luke* admonish his Hearers to flye out of *Jerusalem* and *Judæa*, and not resort thither from the neighbouring Countries, *when they should see Jerusalem encompassed with Armies*, since those Armies would probably hinder the counselled retirement (at least as to the City.) Whereas he that finds in the Story, that the *Roman* forces under *Gratus* did on a sudden, and (as good Authors tell us) without any manifest Cause withdraw from the siege of *Jerusalem*, and then return to it again, and (under *Titus*) carry the Town by force; he that shall read also in *Euseb. lib. 3, cap. 5.* that

Luke 21. *v.* 21, 22.

that the Christians of *Jerusalem* did (divinely admonished) make use of the Opportunity presented them to quit all of them the City and retire to *Pella* on the other side of *Jordan*; He, I say, that shall read and take notice of all this, will not only cleerly understand the Reasonableness of our Saviours warning, but admire the Prophetick Spirit by which he could give it. And as it is difficult to collect out of the Old Testament alone the History of those times wherein it was written; so it is not to be expected, that out of those Books we should be able to collect and comprehend either compleat Idæas of the Israelitish Government Civil and Ecclesiastical, or the true State of their several Sects, Opinions and affaires in matters of Religion: And yet without the Knowledge of those it cannot be but that many Texts will seem Obscure to us, which were not at all so to them that were coætaneous to the Pen-men of those Books. The Labours of some modern Criticks that have put themselves to the trouble of making a thorow search into the Writings of those Jewish Rabbies that lived about our Saviour's and his Apostles times, have

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by the help of this Rabinical Learning already cleered up divers Texts which before were Dark, because they related to particular Sects, Customs, Sayings or Opinions amongst the then *Jews*, whose knowledge the Writers of the New Testament do not Teach but Suppose. And I doubt not but higher and valuable Attainments in that kind of Learning (how worthless soever I should think it, if it were not conducive to the Illustration of the Scripture) will ere it be very long disperse that Obscurity, which yet dwells upon divers other Texts, and will shew the Groundlessness of all our Cavils at them, as well as that of many of our too fierce contentions about them. I shall add, that I dare almost presume to question, whether even our famousest Criticks have not left divers Mosaical Texts in the dark, if not clouded them by their Comments, meerly for want of knowing the Religion of the antient *Zabians*, in opposition of whose Magical worship and Superstitions, I am apt to think divers Ceremonies of the Ritual Law of the *Jews* to have been instituted. And yet of those *Zabiists* (or

צבים and صبئين as the *Hebrews*

and *Arabians* expreſs the name) I find a deep and general ſilence in Claſſick Authors, except (the Rabby's Oracle) *Maimonides*, out of whom our great Antiquary (Mr. *Selden*) both in familiar diſcourſe and in his excellent Tract of the *Syrian* Deities gave me firſt a hint, which by lighting on another Author of thoſe parts I have ſince had the luck to improve ſufficiently, to make me fear, that they that are ſtrangers to the *Zabians* Rites and Creed, will ſcarce give us the cleereſt account, the Theme is capable of in divers paſſages of the Moſaick Law: as I am apt to think that our Ignorance or want of taking notice of the Perſwaſions and Practices of the *Gnoſticks*, *Carpocratians*, and the Sects allyed to theirs, if it do not make us miſtake and misinterpret, doth at leaſt keep us from giving the cleereſt Interpretations whereof they are capable to many Paſſages of the New Teſtament, wherein they are either cleerly Pointed at, or cloſely Related to.

Thirdly, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe, that of the Texts that are now difficult unto us, there are divers that are ſo but becauſe they were principally

pally intended for the use of those that shall live in after-times, by whom they will questionless be better understood. To the *Jews* that lived in and long after *Moses* his time, many of those Predictions both Verbal and Typical of the Messias seemed very Dark, which to us Christians are abundantly Illustrated by the rising of that Sun of Righteousness, who was aimed at in them. And though the Mysterious Temple and City described in *Ezekiel*, as also much of the *Apocalypse* and divers other Prophetick Passages of Holy Writ do yet seem abstruse to us, yet they will not appear so to those, to whom their Completion (the best expositor of dark Prophecies) shall have unfolded them. For I observe, that as some Divine predictions are cleerly expressed, to the intent that those that are made acquainted with them may before-hand know what will happen, so others are proposed, not so much that those, to whom they are first addressed, should know the fore-told events, before they come to pass, as that, when they do come to pass, the same accomplishment, that expounds them, may evince that the Forteller of

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them was able to Foresee them: according to that of our Saviour to his Disciples, to whom he Propheſyed the Sufferings they ſhould undergo, *Theſe things have I told you, that when the time ſhall come ye may remember that I told you of them.* John 26 4.

Fourthly, it was fit, that there ſhould be ſome Obſcure Paſſages left in the inſpired Volume, to keep thoſe from the Knowledge of ſome of thoſe Divine Myſteries, that are both delightful and uſeful, though not abſolutely neceſſary, who do not think ſuch knowledge worth ſtudying for. As it was alſo fit (which I partly noted above) that there ſhould be ſome clouded and myſterious Texts, to excite and recompence the Induſtry and ſpeculation of Elevated wits and Religious Inquirors.

Laſtly, there are divers Obſcure paſſages in Scripture, wherein the difficulty lies in the thing it ſelf that is expreſſed, not in the Scriptures manner of expreſſing it. For not to mention that obſcureneſs, that is wont to attend Prophetick Raptures (of which there are many mentioned in Scripture) there are divers things, that we agree to be Knowable by the bare light of Nature without

without Revelation, which yet are so uneasie to be satisfactorily understood by our imperfect Intellects, that let them be delivered in the cleareſt Expreſſions men can deviſe, the Notions themſelves will yet appear Obſcure. Thus in natural Philoſophy it ſelf, the Nature of Place and time, the Origine of Motion, and the manner whereby the humane Soul performs her Functions, are things which no Writers delivered ſo clearly, as not to leave the things ſomewhat Obſcure to Inquiſitive and Examining Readers. And ſhall we then wonder that thoſe Texts of Scripture, that treat of the Nature and Decrees of God, and of ſuch ſublime Myſteries as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Influence of the Spirit upon the Soul of man, and ſuch other abſtruſe things, which it cannot be Reaſonably expected that humane words ſhould keep from being hard to be comprehended by humane underſtandings, ſhould be Obſcure to us, eſpecially if we ſuffer our not underſtanding their full meaning at firſt to deter us from endeavouring to find it out by further ſtudy? I am ſorry I can add on this Occaſion, that divers Texts

are made to appear more dark, than otherwayes they would, by the Gloſſes and Interpretations of ſome, that pretend to expound them. For there are divers ſubtil men, who being perſwaded upon certain Metaphyſical Notions they are fond of, or by the Authority of ſuch either Churches or Perſons as they highly Reverence, that ſuch or ſuch Niceties are either requiſite to the Explication of this or that Doctrine delivered in Scripture, or at leaſt deducible from it, will make bold ſo to interpret dark Texts (and ſometimes even clear ones) that they ſhall ſeem to hold forth not only their own ſenſe, but the nice ſpeculations or deductions of him that quotes them: So that divers Texts, which to a Rational and unprepoſſeſſed peruſer would appear plain enough, ſeem to contain Inextricable difficulties to thoſe unwary or prejudicate Readers, who are not careful to diſtinguiſh betwixt the plain ſenſe of a Text it ſelf, and thoſe Metaphyſical ſubtilties, which witty and intereſted Perſons would father upon it, though oftentimes thoſe Niceties are either ſo groundleſs, that though there needs much Wit to deviſe them, there

needs

needs but a little Reason to despise them; or so unintelligible, as to tempt a considering man to suspect, that the Proposers either mean not what they speak, or understand not what they say. And I could wish these Metaphysical Querks, with which several not only School-men but other Writers have perplexed the Doctrine of Predestination, of the Trinity, of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the will of man, and some other mysteries of Christian Religion, did not give advantages against those Doctrines to the Opposers of them, and perhaps make some men opposers, who otherwise would not have been so. And I fear, that too great an opportunity has been afforded to Atheistical wits by the unintelligible Phancies, which many have made bold to add to what the Scripture has revealed concerning the Eternity and Infiniteness of God: For whilst men indiscreetly and unskilful twist together as integral parts of the same Doctrine a revealed truth with their own Metaphysical speculations about it, though these be too often such as cannot be proved, or perhaps so much as understood, they tempt

ſuch examining Readers, as are rational enough to diſcern the groundleſneſs of one part of the Doctrine, to reject the whole for it's ſake. But I fear I have digreſſed: For my intention was only to intimate, that it is not oftentimes ſo much what the Scripture ſays, as what ſome men perſwade others it ſayes, that makes it ſeem obſcure; and that as to ſome other paſſages that are ſo indeed, ſince it is the abſtruſeneſs of what is taught in them that makes them almoſt inevitably ſo, It is little leſs ſawcy upon ſuch a ſcore to find fault with the ſtyle of the Scripture, than to do ſo with the Author for making us but men.

Thus much being ſaid by way of Anſwer to the firſt ſort of Objectors of Darkneſs againſt the Scripture, it is eaſie to foreſee, that the ſecond ſort of them may endeavour to pervert what has been delivered to Apologize for their Neglect of the Scripture, by alleging, that albeit what has been repreſented may ſerve to ſhew that the Obſcurity of the Scripture is juſtifyable, yet the very proving it needfull or fit that it ſhould be obſcure, is a plain confeſſion that it is ſo. Wherefore it is requiſite

quiſite that I now ſay ſomthing to this ſort of Objectors alſo, who are ſo unfavourable to the Scripture and themſelves, as that, becauſe they cannot underſtand all of it, they will not endeavour to learn any thing from it. I have already acknowledged it, and ſhall not now deny, that (as Heaven it ſelf is not all ſtars) there may be parts of Scripture, whoſe clear expoſitions ſhall enoble and bleſs the remoteſt of ſucceeding ages, and that perhaps ſome myſteries are ſo obſcure, that they are reſerved to the Illumination and Blazes of the laſt and univerſal fire.

But here it would be conſidered in the firſt place, that thoſe Texts that are ſo difficult to be underſtood, are not neceſſary to be ſo. In points fundamental and indiſpenſably neceſſary, the darkneſs of Scripture is no leſs partial, then of *Egypt*, which benighted onely the Enemies, but involved not the people of God: in ſuch Articles as theſe, *If the Goſpel be hid, 'tis hid to them that are loſt, in whom the God of this World hath blinded the minds*; At leaſt in relation to ſuch Truths as theſe we may juſtly apply that of *Moſes*, where he tells Iſrael, *This Commandment which I* 2 Cor. 3. 4.

Deut. 30. v. 11, 12, 13, 14. *command thee this day is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.* — But *the word is very near unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart that thou mayest do it.* And surely the Bibles appropriate being (as it self tells us) *to enlighten the eyes, and to make wise the simple:* and it being written for the use of the whole people of God, whereof the greater number are no Clerks, things are there expressed with an Evidence proportionable to the degree of Assent that they exact, and are as far forth intelligible to pious and industrious Readers as they are necessary to be understood by them; and we may not unfitly say of the understanding of those cloudy passages of Scripture, what I remember a Father said of the Sacrament, *That not the wanting it, but the slighting it shall condemn men.* 'Tis our duty to study them, but 'tis not (alwayes) to understand them.

Psal. 19. 7, 8.

Non privatio sed contemptus damnat.

And as the Knowledge of those Texts that are Obscure, is not Necessary, so those others, whose sense is necessary to be understood, are Easie enough to be so. And those are as much more Numerous than the others, as more Clear. Yes, there are shining

ſhining paſſages enough in Scripture to light us the way to Heaven, though ſome unobvious Stars of that bright Sphær cannot be diſcerned without the help of a Teleſcope. Since God then has been pleaſed to provide ſufficiently for our Inſtruction, what reaſon have we to repine, if we have in a book, not deſigned for us alone, provided alſo for thoſe that are fitted for higher attainments, eſpecially ſince, if we be not wanting to our ſelves, thoſe paſſages that are ſo obſcure as to teach us nothing elſe, may at leaſt teach us Humlity?

Nor does it misbecome God's Goodneſs any more than his Wiſdom, to have ſo tempered the Canonical Books, as therein to leave all ſorts of Readers an Exerciſe for their Induſtry, and give even the greateſt Doctors continual inducements to implore his Inſtructions, and depend on him for his Irradiations, by leaving amongſt many paſſages that ſtoop unto our weakneſs, ſome that may make us ſenſible of it. It ſhould, me thinks, be looked upon as the Prerogative, not the Diſparagement of the Scriptures, that the Revelation of his truth vouchſafed us

by God in them is like a River, wherein a Lamb may quench his thirſt, and which an Elephant cannot exhauſt. I ſhould think him but an ill-natur'd Child, who ſhould be angry to ſee Strong meat provided for his Elder brothers, becauſe he himſelf can yet digeſt nothing but Milk, And as the ſame Child being grown up to riper years would be then troubled, that according to his firſt envious wiſh there were no ſtronger Aliment provided in the Family than Milk: So when by the attentive and repeated peruſal of the Scripture, a Child in knowledge ſhall attain to ſome higher meaſure of skill in the Scriptures, he will then be well pleaſed to have his underſtanding exerciſed by thoſe moſt myſterious Texts, of which he formerly complained that they ſurpaſſed it. However, ſince there are ſo many plain paſſages of Scipture, that clearly hold forth, not only all that is neceſſary for us to know, but I fear much more than we are careful to learn and practize, the zelous Chriſtian would no more decline feeding on this heavenly food, though all the hard places ſhould ſtill remain ſuch to him. than the *Jews* would forbear

to eat the Paſchal Lamb, *though not a bone of it were to be broken.* And (in earneſt) would not he merit unrelieved Beggary, that ſhould refuſe the profit of a rich Mine, becauſe all thoſe of the World are not yet diſcovered, nor thoſe of the *Indies* exhauſted? Exod. 12. 46.

Moreover, the pretended Obſcureneſs of the Bible is a miſtaken diſcouragement from reading it: for the frequency of reading it ſtill leſſens that obſcurity; which like a Miſt ſeems thicker at a diſtance than when one enters it, and attempts a paſſage through it, which in our caſe many pious Students have done ſo proſperouſly, as to find by welcom experience, that what at a diſtance deterred them, was not intended to fruſtrate Induſtry, but puniſh Lazineſs.

Beſides, that the Scripture being avowedly the beſt Expoſitor of it ſelf, our Ignorance of thoſe places, whoſe ſenſe we ſeek for, makes us often occaſionally much knowinger, and more perfect in the meaning of all the reſt; and makes us too ſo much more ready in the uſes of them, that I cannot but apply to this ſubject the Fable of that dying Husband-man, who by telling his Sons of a hidden Maſs of Wealth he

he had buried in a nameleſs place of his Vineyard, occaſioned their ſo ſedulous Delving all the Ground, and turning up the Earth about the Roots of the Vines, that they found indeed a Treaſure, though not in Gold, in Wine: for thus out of hope, by the light of underſtood Scriptures to penetrate the ſenſe of the obſcurer ones, we occaſionally ſo improve our knowledg and readineſs in the clearer Paſſages, that our By-acquiſts do richly recompence our fruſtrated (or rather unſucceeding) pains; ſince our particular Diſappointments hinder not the promotion of our general Deſign, which is a greater proficiency in Spiritual knowledge, and therefore ought not to deter us from the duty of thoſe ſearches, in which not onely to Diſcover is happy, but even the unſucceeding Attempts are gainfull, what ever the Event be, the pains being ſeldome fruitleſs, but reaching either their end or recompence. And this prompts me to repreſent to you further, that not onely the Scripture is inſtructive upon the ſame account with other Theological writings, but that we may hope to improve our underſtandings by it

upon

upon this score, that it is also the instituted means, as well of Knowledge, as of Grace, and appointed for our Instruction by him, who, as Sin came into the World by Mans listning to the Words of the Devil, is pleased to make Restoring Grace operate chiefly by our listning to the Word of God (whether heard or read.) Wherefore those, whom the Intuition of this encouragement invites to be diligent Perusers of the Scripture, do to their infirm understandings, as the Inhabitants of *Gennezareth* did to their sick and weak Countrey-men, lay them in Jesus his way, and consequently in that of recovery. 'Tis of (at least one of) the darkest books of the Scripture, that it is said, *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this Prophecy.* The Eunuch in the Acts would (though upon the high way) needs read the Prophet *Isaiah*, and though (as appears by his question to *Philip*) as then he understood not what he read, yet did the Spirit take thence (perhaps arise, as well as) opportunity to reveal Christ unto him, and both satisfie him of the meaning of that Prediction, and acquaint him with the fresh and happy

Mark 6. v. 56.

Rev. 1.3.

Accom-

Accompliſhment of it. And ſurely this Conſideration of the Bibles being one of the Conduit-pipes, through which God hath appointed to conveigh his Truths, as well as Graces to his Children, ſhould methinks both hugely animate us to the ſearching of the Scriptures, and equally refreſh us in it. For as no Inſtrument is weak in an omnipotent hand: ſo ought no means to be looked upon as more promiſing than that which is like to be proſpered by Grace, as 'tis deviſed by Omniſcience. We may confidently expect Gods bleſſing upon his own Inſtitutions, ſince we know, *that whatſoever we ask according to the will of God, he will give it us*, and we can ſcarce ask any thing more agreeable to the will of God, than the competent underſtanding of that Book, wherein his Will is contained.

1 John 5. 14.

The Difficulty ought not to deter us from the duty of Searching the Scriptures, the difficulteſt commands of God being a Warrant to a Believers confidence of being enabled Acceptably (though not Exactly) to obey them; which St. *Peter* ſeems to have known well in the Theory, though he failed in the Practice, when to be enabled to walk

walk upon the Sea, he desires onely that our Saviour would please to command him to come to him upon the water. The Bible is indeed amongst Books, what the Diamond is amongst stones, the preciousest, and the sparklingest, the most apt to scatter light, and yet the solidest, and the most proper to make Impressions: but were it as unsuitable to its end, as 'tis the contrary, I should remember, that our Saviour could successively imploy even clay and spittle to illuminate blind eyes: and though I thought the Bible to be on other accounts no more than equal to other books of Morality and Devotion, Gods Designation would make me study it more hopefully, by minding me of that of the *Syrian* Leper, when he would needs have *Abana* and *Parphar*, Rivers of *Damascus*, likely to be as medicinal for his disease, as *Jordan*, and vainly fant'sied, that Gods appointment could not put a difference betwixt things that knew no other.

Mat. 14. *v.* 28.

John 9. 6.

2 *Kings* 5. *v.* 12.

I know, that because of the Intermixture of some Obscurer Texts of Scripture with the Clear ones, there are divers well-meaning, and even devout persons

persons that leave the study of it for that of other books of Religion, which by leaving out all such difficulter matters seem to promise more of Instruction: But notwithstanding this, I shall not much scruple to affirm, that as the Moon, for all those darker parts, we call her spots, gives us a much greater light, than the Stars that seem all luminous; so will the Scripture, for all its Obscurer passages, afford the Christian and Divine more light than the brightest humane Authors.

To dispatch, since the Scripture is both a Naturally proper, and an Instituted Instrument to conveigh Revealed knowledge to the studiers of it; and in it many Clear passages may instruct Ordinary capacities; and it's Darker ones may either recompense more Inquisitive wits or humble them; I see not, why the Obscureness of a small part of it should deterr any sort of pious persons from the perusal of the whole. And as the Word of God is termed a *light*, so hath it this property of what it is called, that both the plainest Rusticks may, if they will not wilfully shut their eyes, by the benefit of its light direct their steps, and the deepest Philosophers

Psal. 119. vers. 105. and Prov. 6. 23.

losophers may be exercised, if not posed and dazled with it's abstruser mysteries. For thus in the Scripture the Ignorant may learn all requisite Knowledge, and the most Knowing may learn to discern their Ignorance.

The second Objection.

To proceed now to the second Objection against the Style of Scripture: The seemingly Disjoynted Method of that Book is by many much Cavilled at; to which, were the Supposal a Truth, I might reply, That the Book of Grace doth but therein resemble the Book of Nature; wherein the Stars, (however Astronomers have been pleas'd to form their Constellations) are not more Nicely or Methodically plac'd than the Passages of Scripture: That where there's nothing but Choice Flowers, in what Order soever you find them, they will make a good Posie: That it became not the Majesty of God to suffer himself to be fetter'd to Humane Laws of Method, which devis'd onely for our own Narrow and Low Conceptions would

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sometimes be Improper for, and Injurious to his, who may well say (as he doth in the Prophet) that his Thoughts are so far from being ours, that, *As the Heavens are higher than the Earth; so are his Thoughts higher than our thoughts:* That as a Mixture of Amber-Griece and Musk is more Redolent than the Single Ingredients; and as in Compound Medicines, (as Mithridate and Treacle) the Mixture gives the Electuary a higher Virtue than the Sever'd Drugs possess'd; so oftentimes in Morality and Divinity, a Complication of Precept and Example, of Rhetorick and Mystery, may Operate better than their Distinction would. And sure we should Judge that Man a very Captious Creature, that should take Exception at a Profer'd sum, onely because the Half-Crowns, Shillings, and Six-pences, were not sorted in Distinct Heaps, but huddled into One. This, I say, with much more, might be represented, were the Scripture-Series as Destitute of Method, as is pretended: but the Truth is, that the Method, though it be not Pedantically Nice, is Proper and Excellent; (if the Goodness of a Method be to be judg'd

Isay 55. 8, 9

less

leſs by the Order of the Sections, than its being in Order to the Author's End) and never ſwerv'd from but upon ſufficient Ground, or for ſome Myſterious Purpoſe: the Laws of Order in the Scripture being rarely declin'd, but as the Laws of Nature are in the World, for Man's Inſtruction. The Hiſtorical Diſlocations have their particular Reaſons, and, for the moſt part, are accompted for by Judicious Expoſitors: and as for the frequent (and ſometimes long) Digreſſions, excepted againſt in the Epiſtles of St. *Paul*, were he a bare Humane Writer, I ſhould poſſibly attribute his frequent Excurſions to his Fulneſs upon All Subjects, not his Want of Skill to Proſecute any One; and compare his Pen to thoſe Generous Horſes, who, though never ſo well Managed, will ever be Jetting out on this or that ſide of the Path, not out of Undiſciplinedneſs, but purely out of Metal: But looking upon St. *Paul* under another Notion, I ſhall rather chooſe to tell You, that as Rivers are ſaid to run to the Sea, though oftentimes the Interpoſition of hard or riſing Grounds, or other Obſtacles, force them to ſuch

winding *Meanders*, that they seem to retreat from the Ocean they tend to; which nevertheless with encreased Streams they afterwards bend again their intermitted Course to, having water'd and fertiliz'd by their Passage the Grounds through which they seem'd to wander: so our Apostle, though he direct his Discourse to his Main Scope, may not only without Declining it, but in Order to it, (for in some Cases the Wisdome of the Proverb will inform us, that the Longest Way about is the neareſt Way Home) seem for a while to abandon it, by fetching a compass to Answer some Obvious, or Anticipate some Tacit Objection, and afterwards more Prosperously resume his former Considerations, now Strengthen'd by the Defeat of the interposing Scruples, having by the By happily Illustrated and Enrich'd those Subjects, which his Incidental Excursions led him Occasionally to handle. I must add, that in St. *Paul's*, as in the rest of the Inspired Writings, the meer Want of Heeding the Holy Ghost's way of Writing, makes the Method appear to us at a very great Disadvantage. For in the

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Historical Parts of Scripture, when the Order of Time is Interrupted, those προθύστερα, παρολήψεις and ἐπάνοδοι, and such Dislocations, are us'd oftentimes only to comply with the Connexion of the Matter; and either dispatch all that belongs to the same long Narrative at once, or else to joyn Passages Ally'd in some other Circumstance, though Sever'd in that of Time; and *sometimes* too, things are inserted, which do not readily seem pertinent to the Series of the Discourse, but are Extremely so to some Scope of the Author, and afford much Light and Excellent Hints to the Reader. *Sometimes* the Coherence, where it appears Defective, may be very well made out by rendring *Hebrew* Verbs (and some *Greek* Aorists) in a Preterpluperfect Sense instead of a Perfect; or by some such other Grammatical Variation of the Words, as all that understand *Hebrew* well, know to be allow'd by the Propriety of that Tongue, which ignores divers Moods and Tenses, *&c.* of our Western Languages. *Sometimes* that which seems Incoherent to a Discourse, serves really to Prevent a Foreseen (though perhaps not always

Obvious) Probability of Misapplication of it; and so must not be judg'd Impertinent to a Doctrine, which it hinders from being either scrupled at or abused. *Sometimes* the Prophets, in the midst of the Mention of particular Mercies Promis'd to, or Judgments Denounc'd against the People of God, Sally out into Pathetical Excursions relating to the Messias, which seem extremely Abrupt and Incoherent with the rest, to them that consider not how seasonable the Mention of Christ may be, both in that of the Mercies of God, of which he is the Foundation and Pinacle, the Ground and Consummation, (and the Promise made of him, taught the Faithfull to reason thus with his Apostle, *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*) and with the Threats of the Judgments of God, in which he was his People's Grand Consolation. *Sometimes* ὁ διδάσκαλος, *The Teacher*, that Bishop of our Souls, who was in the Supreme Degree of Perfection, with St. *Paul* required of a Bishop, διδακτικὸς, both Fit and Forward to Teach, takes a Rise from any Invitation,

Rom. 8. *vers.* 32.

John 13. *vers.* 13. 2 *Pet.* 11. 25. 1 *Tim.* 3. 2.

tation, either of a Word, Expreſſion, or Theme, though belonging to his own firſt Subject, to give further Inſtructions, by digreſſing a little to that occaſional and intervening Theme; which, however it related to his Matter, ſuited very well with his Merciful Inclinations to inſtruct dimm Mortals. *Sometimes*, nay oftentimes, the Inſpir'd Diſcourſers ſeem to ſay things not onely Incoherent but Contradictory; (as is very remarkable in divers of St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, where he ſeems to praiſe and diſpraiſe the ſame Perſons) whereas addreſſing themſelves to Mixt Aſſemblies, wherein (as *Noah* and *Ham* in the Ark, and the Tares and the Wheat in *Agro Dominico*) there were both Good and Bad Men, Hereticks, eſpecially Gnoſticks, and Orthodox Chriſtians, they only ſo wiſely diſpens'd and tempered their Diſcourſe, that both theſe ſorts of Perſons might find ſomething in what was in general terms delivered, to appropriate to themſelves in particular; which Application was neceſſarily left to their own Conſciences to make. *Sometimes* the Order is in Scripture much diſturb'd or injur'd by the Omiſſion or Miſplacing of a Pa-

rentheſis. For there not being any in the *Hebrew* Copies, nor (as 'tis thought) in the Original *Greek* ones, the Publiſhers of the ſeveral Editions of the Bible, have plac'd Parentheſes as they have judg'd moſt convenient; ſome including in them what others leave out of them; and ſome making long ones, where others make none at all; and perhaps none of them having been ſo happy, as to leave no Room for Alterations, that may deſerve the Title of Corrections and Amendments. And *ſometimes* too, the ſeeming Immethodicalneſs of the New Teſtament (not to determine any thing of the Antiquity, (which is certainly Great) and the Authority of the Accents, and Partition of the Old Teſtament, (becauſe amongſt very able Criticks *Adhuc ſub Judice lis eſt*) is due to the inconvenient Diſtinction of Chapters and Verſes now in uſe: which though it be a very great Help to the Memory, and be ſome other wayes ſerviceable; yet being of no Greater Antiquity than its Contriver, *Stephanus*; and being (though now of General uſe) but of Private Authority, and by him drawn up in haſte; it will be perhaps no ſlander

der to that Induſtrious Promoter of Heavenly Learning, to ſay, he hath ſometimes Sever'd Matters that ſhould have been left United, and United others which more conveniently he might have Sever'd, and that his Lucky Attempt ought not to lay any Reſtraint upon other Learned Men, from making uſe of the ſame Liberty he took in altering the former Partitions (for of them I ſpeak, not of the Punctation) of the New Teſtament; in altering his Alterations, to the beſt Advantage of the Senſe or Method. The Analytical Works of ſome (I wiſh I could ſay Many) Judicious Expoſitors and Divines upon the Scripture, may ſufficiently manifeſt its being generally reducible enough to a Perſpicuous Order; and that it conforms to the known Laws of Method, where its Diviner one doth not tranſcend them. And it were not impoſſible for me to give divers Inſtances to manifeſt, that as the North-ſtar, though it be leſſe luminous than many others, yet, by reaſon of its Poſition, doth better guide the Pilot, than ev'n the Moon her ſelf: ſo are there ſome Texts in Scripture, which though leſſe Conſpi-

cuous in themſelves, are, by reaſon of their Relation to a Context, more Inſtructive than other more Radiant Paſſages, to which Theſe would be much inferiour, if they were not as well conſiderable for their being There, as ſuch.

The third Objection.

Ally'd to their Objection, who find fault with the Scripture for being Immethodical, is theirs, who would fain perſwade us, that it is ſeldom Coherent, and ſcarce any where Diſcurſive. And I have obſerv'd with trouble, that ev'n ſome Pious Readers are eaſily tempted to look upon the Bible as barely a Repoſitory of Sentences and Clauſes, where Divine Truths lie Huddl'd, and not Rang'd, and are too ready to apply to its Texts the Title, *Nero* gave *Seneca*'s ſtyle, of *Arena ſine calce.* Whereas an Intelligent and Attentive Peruſer may cleerly enough diſcern, both that the Prophets and Apoſtles do make frequent Deductions and Inferences, and that their Arguments, though not caſt into Mood and Figure, are oftentimes as cogent as theirs

theirs, that uſe to make Syllogiſms in *Barbara*. I frequently entertain my ſelf with both thoſe Authors, and yet methinks, St. *Paul* Reaſons as Solidly and as Acutely as *Ariſtotle*: and certainly, according to *David*'s Logick, (*He that planted the Ear ſhall he not hear? he that fram'd the Eye ſhall he not ſee? he that teacheth Man Knowledge ſhall not he know?*) the Firſt and Grand Author of Reaſon ſhould as well know, how to manage and diſcloſe that Faculty, as they that poſſeſs it but by Participation, and gliſter ſo but with ſome few condeſcending Beams, vouchſaf'd by that bright Sun, who is indeed the *Father of Lights, from which each Good and Perfect Gift deſcends*. But on this occaſion to point at a few Particulars, I conſider

Pſal. 94. 7. 10.

Jam. 1. 17.

1. That ſome Ratiocinations of Scriptures remain undiſcern'd or miſunderſtood, becauſe of our unacquaintedneſſe with the Figurative, and (oftentimes) Abrupt way of Arguing uſual amongſt the Eaſtern People, who in their Arguments us'd to leave much to the Diſcretion and Collection of thoſe they dealt with; and diſcours'd at a wide diſtance from the Logical Forms

Forms of our *European* Schools, as to Persons verst in their Writings cannot but be notorious.

2. That the seeming Incoherency of many Ratiocinations proceeds purely from the mis-rendring of the Original Particles, especially of the *Hebrew* Conjunction Copulative *Vau*, or *Vaf*, (as 'tis diversly pronounc'd by the *Jews*, of whom I shall here advertise you once for all, that they have confest to me, they differ in pronouncing *Hebrew*, not only from the Christians, but exceedingly from one another) for there is hardly any of those Particles that hath not besides the Obvious, Various significations, of which, if that were skilfully and freely in every Text taken up, that would There afford the Best Sense, the Scripture would, I am confident, appear much more Coherent and Argumentative than Translations or Expositors are wont to make it; and though I did but consider how many thousand times the Particle *Vaf* is used in the Scripture, and that it doth not Onely (though it do Primarily) signifie AND, but hath also (I speak within Compass) four or five and twenty other significations (as That,

But,

But, Or, So, When, Therefore, Yet, Then, Becauſe, Now, As, Though, &c. and that the Senſe only gives it this great Diverſity of Acceptions; I cannot but think that if we alwayes allow'd our ſelves an equal freedome in rendring it, where the Motive (which is the Exigency or Conveniency of the Senſe) is the ſame, the dexterous uſe and Rendring of that one Particle, would make no ſmall Number of Texts both better Underſtood, and more Eſteem'd.

3. That ſometimes (eſpecially in *Salomon*'s and St. *Paul*'s Writings) in many Paſſages ſo penn'd as to contain (like *Seneca*'s) a tacit kind of Dialogue, That is unskilfully by Readers, and even Interpreters, taken for an Argument or an Aſſertion, which is indeed an Objection: and that ſuch a Miſtake muſt mightily Diſcompoſe the Contexture of a Diſcourſe, even a raw Logician need not be told.

4. That the Omiſſion or Miſplacing of Parentheſes (which the *Hebrew* Text altogether wanting, Interpreters have ſupply'd and us'd at their own Diſcretion) makes the Scripture oftentimes appear leſs Diſcurſive, as well as (what we elſewhere complain of) leſs Metho-

Methodical. And the like may be said of the Points of Interrogation. For whether it be true or no what the Criticks esteem, that in the Original *Greek* Copies of the New Testament there were no such Points (as indeed I have found them wanting in the Ancientest Manuscripts I have seen) 'tis certain, that in our Modern Copies, both *Greek* and Translated, the Authors of several Editions have variously plac'd them as themselves thought fit: and though instead of the Interrogative Point, the *Hebrews* make use of their interrogative *He*; yet that the Sense of the Words, and a certain supposed Modulation, do oftentimes make an Interrogation where that *He* is wanting, an *Hebrician* can scarcely ignore, no more than a Logician, that the Interrogation is not alwayes supply'd to the best Advantage of the Scripture's Logick.

5. That the Apostles and other Inspir'd Discoursers in the Bible, divers times use Arguments, not to Convince Opposers, but to Confirm Believers. For the Persons they reason with, being such, oftentimes, as Esteem them Teachers sent from God, upon whose score all they Teach exacts Belief, they

may

may without Irrationality uſe Arguments to confirm in their Doctrine Men already acquieſcing in the Principles of it, and perſwaded of their Integrity, Sufficiency, and Authority; that 'twould be improper to urge againſt a Refractory Disbeliever, that is convinc'd of none of theſe. And as Maſters often uſe in inſtructing their Scholars, Arguments they would forbear to inſiſt on againſt a Profeſs'd Antagoniſt: ſo the Apoſtles dealing with thoſe that thought them Inſpir'd Teachers, and fully Inſtructed in the Myſteries of Scripture, and the Deſign'd Diſpenſations of God, might juſtly draw Inferences not to be urg'd againſt an Infidel, from a Doctrine firſt delivered by themſelves, or from a Text or Paſſage wherein thoſe they reaſon'd with juſtly ſuppos'd they might know more of the Mind and Counſel of God than other Men; and would teach Nothing as Such that was not ſo.

6. That Arguments Exquiſite, and (as Artiſts term them) Apodictical, had been oftentimes leſs Proper in Diſcourſes, which being addreſt to Popular Auditories, requir'd rather Popular Arguments; which the Inſpir'd Diſcourſers

courſers employ, but as likely to be better Underſtood, and more prevalent than thoſe which are ſo Logical that they require Logicians to reliſh them. Where Teaching and Perſwading is the Deſign, not only the Native Cogency of a Ratiocination is to be conſider'd; but it's Proportion to their Spirits 'tis addres'd to, and it's aptitude to Work upon them. For as a Spider will catch Flies better than a Hawk can, as a Cat is more fit to deſtroy Mice than a Gray-hound, though this be ſtronger and ſwifter; and as the Crowing of a Cock will (according to famous Naturaliſts) ſooner fright a Lion than the Bellowing of a Bull, though the latter be much the more terrifying Noiſe, and proceed from the more formidable Animal: ſo oftentimes weaker and Popular Arguments, ſucceed better with a reſembling Auditory, than the Irrefragableſt Syllogiſms.

7. That divers Scripture-Arguments do not Logically and Cogently prove the Thing they would perſwade, meerly becauſe they were meant only for what Logicians call *Argumenta ad Hominem*; (Reaſonings deſigned not ſo properly to Demonſtrate the Opinion they

they contend for, irrelatively and abſtractedly conſider'd, as to convince of the Truth of that Opinion, the Perſons they are addreſs'd to) and conſequently the Inſpir'd Diſcourſers arguing *è Conceſsis*, from Principles conceded and Confeſs'd by thoſe they reaſon with, though the Principles ſhould be unſolid, the Ratiocination is not. Thus there are Divers Texts of the Old Teſtament apply'd to Chriſt in the New, which though they did not now inevitably conclude againſt the Preſent *Jews*, were without any Illogicalneſſe employ'd againſt their Anceſtors; becauſe then the Relation of thoſe Paſſages to the Meſſias was ſo acknowledg'd, that there needed but the Pertinent Applications made of them in the New Teſtament; whereas the Refractorineſſe of the Succeeding *Jews* hath taught them to deviſe ſo many Sophiſtical Evaſions to elude the Texts we ſpeak of, that they now Diſpute not only the Application of them, but the Explication too. St. *Jude* argues with the Rodomonts of his Time, out of the Story of the Arch-Angels and the Devil's Conteſt about the Body of *Moſes*: and though perhaps that Story

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be (like the *Jewish* Book whence it seems not improbable it was taken) somewhat Apocryphal, yet as long as they Reverenc'd it, it was not Irrational in him to urge them with it, and employ it to the Redargution of their Insolence. And as although there be nothing lesse solid, and more fickle than the Wind; yet the skilful Pilot diligently observes it, and makes it drive on his Ship more forcibly, than the Powerfulleſt and beſt contriv'd Engins in the World could: so though there be scarce any thing more groundlesse and unstable than Popular Opinions and Perswasions, yet a Wise Teacher neglects them not, and may sometimes make such use of them, as to draw thence Arguments more Operative than the accurateſt Syllogisms Logick could devise. And indeed the most convincing Proofs of Assertions being ever afforded by the *Medium* wherein both parties agree, not only *Socrates* in *Plato*'s Dialogues, but dexterous Discoursers generally have often elected the drawing of Inferences from the Opinions and Concessions of those they dealt with, as the most perswasive and successful way of Arguing. To all which I shall add, 8. That

8. That another thing which very generally keeps Men from discerning the Reasonings (and consequently oftentimes the Reasonableness and true Sense) of Scripture Texts, is, the Shiness of Divines to let the Context and the Speakers Scope, regulate their choice, amongst all the Various, though not equally Obvious, significations of Ambiguous Words and Phrases. 'Tis not that (as far as I have observed) Men almost of all Religions are not wont to make bold with (and perhaps for a need to Strain or Wrest) Phrases and Words of Scripture, when the giving them less usual Notions may fit them to serve their turns: but the Mischief is, that they decline the Commonest Acceptions, but to make the Texts they quit them in, Symphonize with their Tenents, not with their neighbouring Texts. 'Twere methinks Impartialler, if the frequenter Impartialler of an Expression be to be wav'd (as oftentimes it must) for one less Current, to do this to make the Scripture Coherent or Discursive: and then, for our Opinions, rather to conform them to the Sense of the Scripture, than wrest the Words of Scripture to Them. But per-

haps this Impartiality would silence too many of our clamorous Controversies (by shewing some to be Groundless and others Undeterminable) to be likely to take place in the heated Spirits of men; some of whom, I fear, whilest their fewds and Fierceness last, would be willinger to have the Texts of Scripture loose stones, which they may more easily throw at their Adversaries, than Built up into a Structure, wherein they must lose that convenience (it being difficult to pluck stones out of a Building) though Reason her self were the Architect.

But to leave these eager disputants to their Animosities, we shall again repeat, that the Bible loses much by not being consider'd as a Systeme. For though many other Books are comparable to Cloath, in which by a small Pattern we may safely judge of the whole piece; Yet the Bible is like a fair Suit of *Arras*, of which though a Shread may assure you of the fineness of the Colours, and Richness of the stuff, yet the Hangings never appear to their true Advantage, but when they are display'd to their full Dimensions, and seen together.

These things, *Theophilus*, among many others, may be represented on the behalf of the Scripture, against those who will needs Censure it as a Collection, not to say a Heap, of Immethodical and Incoherent Passages. But lest you should suspect me of Partiality, I shall ingenuously confess to you, that there are some things in the Oeconomy of Scripture, that do somewhat Distress my Reason to find a Satisfactory accompt of; and that there are very few things wherein my Curiosity is more concern'd, and would more welcom a Resolution in. But when I remember how many things I once thought Incoherent, in which I now think I discern a Close (though Mystick) Connection; when I reflect on the Author and the Ends of the Scripture, and when I allow my self to imagine how exquisite a Symmetry (though as yet undiscern'd by me) Omniscience Doth, and After-Ages (probably) Will discover in the Scripture's Method, in spite of those seeming Discomposures that now puzzle me: when I think upon all this, I say, I think it just to check my forward Thoughts, that would either presume

to know all the Recluſe Ends of Omniſcience, or peremptorily judge of the Fitneſs of Means to Ends unknown; and am reduc'd to think that Oeconomy the Wiſeſt, that is choſen by a Wiſdom ſo boundleſs, that it can at once Survay all Expedients, and ſo Vnbyaſs'd, that it hath no intereſt to chooſe any, but for it's being Fitteſt. I ſhall annex, that I think thoſe muſt derogate hugely from the Scripture, who onely conſider the Senſe of the Particular Sections, or ev'n Books of it: for I conceive, that (as in a lovely Face, though the Eye, the Noſe, the Lips, and the other Parts ſingly look'd on may beget Delight and deſerve Praiſe; yet the whole Face muſt neceſſarily loſe much by not being ſeen All together; ſo) though the ſever'd Leaves and Portions of Scripture do Irrelatively, and in themſelves, ſufficiently betray and evidence their own Heavenly Extraction; yet he that ſhall attentively ſurvay that whole Body of Canonical Writings we now call the Bible, and ſhall judiciouſly in their Syſteme compare and confer them to each other, may diſcern upon the whole Matter, ſo admirable a Contexture

ture and Diſpoſition, as may manifeſt that Book to be the Work of the ſame Wiſdom, that ſo Accurately compos'd the Book of Nature, and ſo Divinely contriv'd this vaſt Fabrick of the World. The Books of Scripture illuſtrate and expound each other; *Geneſis* and the *Apocalypſe* are in ſome things reciprocal Commentaries; (as in Trigonometry the Diſtanteſt ſide and Angle uſe beſt to help us to the Knowledge one of th' other;) and as in the Mariners Compaſs, the Needle's extremity, though it ſeem to point purpoſely but at the North, doth yet at the ſame time diſcover both Eaſt and Weſt, as diſtant as they are from it, and from each other: ſo do ſome Texts of Scripture guide us to the Intelligence of others, from which they are widely diſtant in the Bible, and ſeem ſo in the Senſe. 'Tis as High as Pious a Satisfaction to obſerve how the Sacred Pen-men ſupply each others Omiſſions (as is very obſervable in the four Evangeliſt's mention of the Genealogy of Chriſt,) according to Gods Degrees and Seaſons in diſpenſing the Knowledge of his Truths and Myſteries in the ſeveral Ages of the Church;

(to which he at first vouchsaf'd *but a light shining in a Dark place untill the day Dawn*, and to which these mutual Irradiations and secret References perswade, that all these reputed Authors had their Pens guided by an Omniscient Hand, and were but the several Secretaries of the same Enditer) and to find in Writers sever'd by so many Ages, and Regions, a Harmony whose Dissonances serve but to manifest the Sincerity and Unconspiringness of the Writers. And truly for my part, I am professedly enough an Impartialist, not to stick to Confess to you, *Theophilus*, that I read the Bible and the Learnedst Expositors on it, with somewhat Particular Aims and Dispositions. For besides, that I come not to them with a crowd of Articles which I am there resolved to find or make Arguments to defend, with the Overthrow of all Antagonists, esteeming it less safe to carry my Opinions to the Scriptures than to take them up There: besides this, I say, though I neglect not those clear Passages or Arguments that may establish the Doctrine of that Church I most adhere to, yet am I much less busied, and con-

2 Pet. 1. 19.

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cern'd to collect thoſe ſubtile Gloſſes or Inferences that can but enable me to ſerve one Subdiviſion of Chriſtians againſt another, than heedfully to make *ſuch* Obſervations, as may ſolidly Juſtifie to my own thoughts, and improve in them, a Reverence for the Scripture it ſelf, and Chriſtianity in general: *ſuch* Obſervations as may diſcloſe to me in the Bible, and the grand Articles clearly deliver'd in it, a Majeſty and an Excellency becoming God himſelf, and tranſcending any other Author; and *ſuch* Obſervations (to diſpatch) as may Unveyl to me in the Scripture, and what it Treats of, that πολυποίκιλ☞ Ϛοφία τ☞ Θε☞, *Manifold Wiſdom of God*, which even the Angels learn by the Church. Theſe are, I confeſs, the Things (as to ſpeculative Divinity) that I Gladlieſt meet with, and take the heedfulleſt Notice of, in the Writings of Divines, of whatſoever Religion that owns the Scripture: (for in this I am almoſt equally gratified by the abler Expoſitors of all diſſenting Sects) For I can ſcarce think any Pains miſpent, that brings me in ſolid Evidences of that Great Truth, That the Scripture is the Word *Eph.* 3.10.

of God, which is indeed the Grand Fundamental; all other Articles generally thought so, being, if Truths, better deducible from this one, than This from any of Them. And I use the Scripture, not as an Arsenal, to be resorted to onely for Arms and Weapons to defend this Party, or defeat its Enemies, but as a Matchless Temple, where I delight to Be, to contemplate the Beauty, the Symmetry, and the Magnificence of the Structure, and to Encrease my Awe, and Excite my Devotion to the Deity there Preached and Ador'd.

The fourth Objection.

Of Texts seemingly Impertinent or Useless.

The Apostle of the Gentiles Teaching us that the *Whole Scripture* (for so I should rather English the Πᾶσα γραφὴ, because there follows) is θεόπνευστος *Divinely inspir'd, and is Profitable for Doctrine, for Conviction, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness; That the Man of God may be perfect, thorowly furnished unto all Good Works*: and the Apostle of the Circumcision assuring us, that, *Prophecy came not in Old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men of God*

2 Tim. 3. 15, 16.

2 Pet. 1. 21.

God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt; we are not to believe that ſo Divine an Enditer, by Secretaries, moſt of them Conſpicuous by the Gifts of Prophecy or Miracles, would ſolemnly Publiſh to the World and for his Church, any thing that ought indeed to be accounted Impertinent or Vſeleſs. And yet of theſe Qualities, ſome Perſons, more Bold than Learned and Conſiderate, are pleas'd to impeach many Paſſages of Scripture. But truly that God who was ſo Preciſely Exact, in the Dimenſions, Proportions, and all other Circumſtances of the Antient Tabernacle, though it were but a Typical and Temporary Structure, ought to be ſuppos'd at leaſt as careful to let nothing Superfluous intrude into thoſe Volumes, which being conſign'd to the Church for the Perpetual Vſe and Inſtruction of it, muſt contain nothing unconducive to thoſe Deſigns; the leaſt Text in it being as contributory to the Compleating of the Bible, as every Loop or Pin was to the Perfection of the Tabernacle. God, by ſo Great a Condeſcenſion to the Weakneſs of our Capacities and Memories, as the with-

with-holding from the Canon so many Writings of *Solomon*, and so many of the Oracles and Miracles of our *Saviour*; and by so strangely Preserving the whole Scripture, (for the Books pretended to be lost, though Written by never so Holy Men, are either in our Bibles extant under other Names, or cannot be Demonstrated to have ever been Canonical, that is, entrusted with the Church as the Infallible Rule of Faith and Life) do's, methinks, abundantly evince his Design of Inchasing nothing there, that hath no tendency to his People's Instruction. Were not my Discourse confin'd by my Occasions, and the fear of Distressing Your Patience to somewhat narrow limits, I could easily by several Instances of Texts, seemingly Useless, shew how much men have been mistaken in imagining them such. Many Passages that at the first or second Reading I could find nor Gues no Uses of, at the Third or Fourth I have discover'd so pregnant in them, that I almost equally admir'd the Richness of those Texts, and my not Discerning it sooner. A Superficial and Cursory Perusal presents us many things as

Trivial

Trivial or Superfluous, which a Perſpicacious Reflection diſcloſes to be Myſterious. And of ſo precious a Quality is the Knowledge of Scripture, that no one Part of it ought to be eſteemed Uſeleſs, if it may but facilitate or improve the Underſtanding of any other: Divine Truths being of that Worth, that the Knowledge and Acquiſt of a few of them, as much out-values a greater Knowledge of other Things, as a Jeweller's Skill and Stock is preferr'd before a Maſon's. And I conſider here, that as the Bible was not Written for any one particular Time or People, but for the whole Church Militant diffus'd through all Nations and Ages; as many Paſſages (as thoſe oppos'd to the *Zabian*'s Magical Rites) have at firſt been neceſſary for the *Jews*, which loſe the Degree (at leaſt) of that Quality for us; ſo there are many others very Uſefull, which will not perhaps be found ſo theſe many Ages: being poſſibly reſerv'd, by the Prophetick Spirit that Endited them, (and whoſe Omniſcience Comprizes and Unites in one Proſpect all Times and all Events) to quell ſome future foreſeen Hereſie; which will not perhaps be

be Born till we be Dead; or resolve some yet unformed Doubt, or confound some Error that hath not yet a Name: So that all the Parts of Scripture are useful in some Ages, and some in All. We read in the Gospel, that at the first Institution of the Eucharist, 'twas expresly said to the Disciples concerning the Sacramental Wine, *Drink ye All of it*, whereas upon the Exhibition of the Bread the Particle *All* is omitted. This Difference 'tis like, the Primitive Christians marvell'd at, and discerning no Reason for it, might be tempted to think the Passage Vseless or Superfluous; but We that live in a Age wherein the Cup is deny'd to much the greater Part of the Communicants, are invited not onely to Absolve the Recording of this Particularity, but to Admire it. The Ceremonial Law, with all its Mystick Rites, (which, like the Manger to the Shepheards, holds forth Wrap'd in His Swathing-Cloths, the Infant Jesus,) to many that bestow the Reading on it, seems scarce Worth it: Yet what Vse the Apostles made of it with the Jews; and how Necessary the Knowledge of it is yet to Vs, in our Controversies with

Mat. 26. 27 *Mark* 14. 23.

Luke 2.

with them, he that is any thing vers'd in them cannot ignore. And let Me tell you, *Theophilus*, that those Fundamental Controversies are both more Necessary and more Worthy a Wisemans study, than most of those comparatively Trifling ones, that at Present so Miserably, (not to say so Causelessly) Distract Christendome. How many Passages of the Prophets by Lazy Readers are thought to have no Vse, which, as the Starre did the Wise-Men, lead the Attentive Considerers to Christ; and so Loudly and Harmoniously, together with *Moses*'s Typick Shades, utter those Words of the Baptist, *Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the Sins of the World*, that I meet with numerous Passages in the New Testament, to which I cannot but apply what St. *Matthew* notes upon his Narrative of our Saviours apprehension: *All this was done that the Scriptures of the Prophets might be fulfilled*; or rather now all this was so done that they were fulfilled; (for so oftentimes the Context Commands us to render the ἵνα in these Citations) and which Recall to my Mind the History of the Transfiguration; For as there the Apo-

Mat. 2.

John 1.29.

Mat. 26. 56.

stles

ſtles at firſt *ſaw* Moſes *and* Elias *Talking with Jeſus*, but at the Second View (when the Cloud was with-drawn, and he had Spoken to them) *ſaw none but Jeſus only*; ſo ſuch Paſſages as I am ſpeaking of, in the Law, the Prophets, and the Goſpel, at firſt Survey appear very Diſtinct Things, but upon a Second Inſpection, and the Acceſs of more Light from an Attentive Collation of things, they do All, as it were, Vaniſh into Chriſt; *Of whom* (to uſe an Apoſtle's Terms) Moſes *in the Law, and the Prophets did Write*: and At whom thoſe Types and thoſe Predictions pointed. Thoſe Inſtances of the Old Teſtament, of the Confus'd or Diſlocated Mention of Known Pedigrees and Stories, were poſſibly Uſeleſs and even Troubleſome to the Antient Jews; but ſerve Us extremely to ſilence the Cavils of the Modern Ones, when they would invalidate the New Teſtament's Authority; becauſe in St. *Steven*'s Narrative, and ſome of the Evangeliſt's Genealogy's, the Holy Ghoſt is pleas'd to employ in the New Teſtament, that Obſcure ſtrain he had oftner us'd in the Old: (and ſure as inſultingly as the Jews uſe

Matt. 17. 3. 8.

John 1. 55.

uſe to urge againſt us Objections of that Nature, I could readily Retaliate, and Repay them in the ſame Coyn, were there no Common Enemy that might be Advantag'd by our Quarrel, and employ either's Arguments againſt both.) And as there are divers Prophetical Paſſages in the *Revelation*, which we know as little the Vſe as Meaning of, which yet doubtleſly our Poſterity will not find Barren, when once the Accompliſhment ſhall have prov'd the Expoſitor of thoſe Predictions, whoſe Event will (if it do nothing elſe) atteſt the Omniſcience of their Inſpirer: ſo poſſibly, of many Moſaick Conſtitutions, wherof we Chriſtians find Excellent Vſes, moſt of the Old Jews ſcarce knew any; at leaſt my Converſation with our Modern Rabbies, ſhows me that they, whilſt they obſtinately decline, referring them to the *Meſsias*, can ſcarce make any more of the Inſpir'd and Myſterious Laws of *Moſes*; (Except thoſe that Relate to the Zabian Superſtition; with which too, moſt of their Doctors are as unacquainted as ours) than the Egyptians, or Gymnoſophiſts, could of their Sacrifices and other Ritual Devotions.

'Tis

'Tis not that I think all the Books that Constitute the Bible, of equal Necessity or equal Vsefulnesse, because they are of equal Extraction; or that I esteem the Church would lose as much in the Prophecy of *Nahum*, as that of *Isaiah*; or in the Book of *Ruth*, as in the Epistle to the *Romans*, or the Gospel of *John*: (as the fix'd Starres themselves, though of the same Heav'n, are not all of the same Magnitude and Lustre) But I esteem all the constituent Books of Scripture, necessary to the Canon of it; as Two Eyes, Two Ears, and the rest of the Members are All necessary to the Body; without divers of which it may Be, but not be so Perfect, and which are all of Great, though not of Equal Usefulness. And perhaps it might without too much Hyperbole be said yet further; that as amongst the Stars that Shine in the Firmament, though there be a Disparity of Greatnes compar'd to one another, yet they are all of them Lucid and Celestial Bodies, and the Least of them far Vaster than any thing on Earth; so of the two Testaments that compose the Bible, though there may be some Disparity

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in Relation to themſelves, yet are they Both, Heav'nly and Inſtructive volumes, and ineſtimably out-valuing any the Earth affords, or Human Pens ere trac'd. And I muſt add, that as Mineraliſts obſerve, that Rich Mines are wont to lye Hid in thoſe Grounds, whoſe Surface bears no Fruit-Trees, (too much malign'd by the Arſenical and reſembling fumes) nor is well ſtor'd with uſefull Plants or Verdure; (as if God would Endear thoſe Ill-favour'd Lands by giving them great portions:) ſo divers Paſſages of Holy Writ, which appear Barren and Unpromiſing to our Firſt Survay, and hold not obviouſly forth Inſtructions or Promiſes, being by a Sedulous Artiſt Search'd into, (and the Original Word ἐρευνᾶν us'd in that Text of *Search the Scriptures*, does properly enough ſignifie the ſearching for hid Treaſure) afford out of their penetrated Bowels, Rich and Precious Myſteries of Divinity. *Joh.* 5. 39.

The Fifth Objection.

The next thing imputed to the Scripture is, that it contains many things Trivial or Impertinent: And 'tis not impoſſible, but that ſome things may Seem ſo, though they Are not: Of this ſort are Disjoynted ſpeeches and abrupt Tranſitions obſerv'd in many of our Saviour's Diſcourſes; in which alſo we ſometimes read him to have Anſwer'd, without being ask'd the Queſtion, (though that be otherwiſe ſalvable by a Critick) and ſometimes to have Anſwer'd to a quite other Queſtion than that he was ask'd. But this is not to be thought an Abſurdity, but an Excellency in the Replies of Chriſt; who poſſeſſing the Prerogative of diſcerning Hearts, did Preach after that rate; His Oratory took a ſhorter Way than Ours can follow it in: he Proſecuted his Deſign by Altering his Diſcourſes; and wiſely meaſur'd the Fitneſs of his Heavenly Sermons, by their Relation to his End, not his Theme. For as he knew his hearers Thoughts, he addreſt himſelf to them; and reaching them in their earlieſt Formation

Formation, and as it were, their first Cradle, before they had leisure to pass into the Tongue, he not more convinc'd his Auditory by Answering their Thoughts, than by thus Manifesting that he Knew them. Of his so much undervalu'd, Parables, some, if not most, do (like those Oysters that besides the Meat they afford us, contain Pearls) not only include excellent Moralities, but comprize important Prophecies. The Parable of the Prægnant Grain of Mustard-seed that so suddenly grew to so large a Plant, was a (now fulfill'd) Prediction of the Admirably swift progress of the Gospel; which from despicable Beginnings, soon prosper'd to a height, that rendred it almost as fit an Object for Wonder as for Faith. That other Parable of the treacherous Husbandmen, clearly foretold Christs Death by the *Jews* Malice, and their Destruction for it. And I despair not to see unheeded Prophecies disclos'd in others of them, especially being inform'd that there is a Critick, (Monsieur *A.B.*) now at work upon a Design of Manifesting many otherwise interpreted Passages of the New Testa-

Mat. 13. *v.* 31, 32.

Matt. 21. 33.

ment to be Prophecies; of whom no leſs than the Famouſeſt of the Modern *Rabbies*, *Menaſſe Ben-Iſrael*, (one time I made him a Viſit at his own Houſe in *Amſterdam*) gave me this Character, that he took him for the Ableſt Perſon of the Chriſtians. Thoſe Hiſtorical Circumſtances quarrell'd with, in Chriſt's Parables, are like the Feathers that wing our Arrows, which though they Pierce not like the Head, but ſeem Slight things, and of a differing matter from the reſt, are yet requiſite to make the Shaft to pierce; & do, both conveigh it to, and penetrate the Mark. But nothing is thought more impertinent in Scripture than the frequent Repetitions. But the Learned need not to be told, that many things ſeem to the Ignorant bare Repetitions, which yet ever bring along with them ſome Light or ſome Acceſſion: in that comparable to the Stars, which as like as they ſeem to Vulgar Gazers, are by the skilful Aſtrologer taught to contain under that Colour and Figure common to them all, very Peculiar and diſtinct Influences. I here alſo conſider, that in all Languages there are ſome Cuſtomary Geminati-

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ons and Expreſſions, which, though to Strangers they appear Superfluous, if not Abſurd; to the Natives, and in the Propriety of that Speech, are not only Current, but oftentimes Emphatical. I find withall, that there is ſcarce any of theſe ſeeming Impertinencies, of which a Learned and Judicious Expoſitor cannot aſſign a pertinent Cauſe or Reaſon. And I conſider too, that the Books of Scripture being Endited, not all at Once, but at very ſeveral and diſtant Times; (according to the Known ſaying, that *Nunquam ſatis docetur quod nunquam ſatis diſcitur*) the Repetition of the ſame Sins and Errors, requir'd that of the ſame Menaces and Diſſwaſions; whoſe frequent enforcing, ſerving both to Atteſt and to Convince the Sinner's Obſtinacy, was not a bare Repeating, but ſuch a Redoubling as we are fain to uſe, to drive in a Nail to the Head; (and the Words of the Wiſe are, in the Wiſe man's Words, *As Nails faſtned by the Maſters of Aſſemblies*) where though in all the renew'd Stroaks the buſie Hammer gives, the Act be ſtill the ſame, yet is no blow ſuperfluous; the Number of them ſerving to compleat their O- Ecc. 12 11

peration. They that in peruſing Books have the Learning and Skill to ſtrip them of what Oratory or Stealth hath Dreſs'd and Diſguis'd them in; will eaſily diſcern moſt of them to be but Vary'd Repetitions; which for my part I find differing from thoſe of Scripture, but in that the later do in the ſame Words generally comprize New Matter, whereas the former uſually preſent us Stale Matter in New Words. And I conſider further, that our own ſad Experience ſhowing us, that there is no Single Text of Scripture that Subtiler Heretick's Sophiſtry cannot plauſibly enough elude; the Holy Ghoſt foreſeeing this from the Beginning, hath Mercifully and Wiſely provided, that the Fundamental Truths of Faith and Manners ſhould be held forth in ſo Many Places, and in ſo much Variety of Expreſſions, that one or other of them muſt unavoidably intercept thoſe Evaſions, and eſcape thoſe Miſconſtructions, that Sophiſtry may put upon the reſt. Which Providence alone hath preſerv'd many Articles from the Attempts of Hereticks; making them both Bluſh to Queſtion, and Deſpair to Diſprove a Truth atteſted by more than

than 2 or 3 Witneſſes, and giving Orthodox Believers the Satisfaction of having their Anchor ty'd to a *Threefold Cord which is not eaſily broken.* Moſt of the Bibles Repetitions (or Inculcations rather) teach us ſomething or other untaught before: and (as in *Pharaoh*'s Viſion, though both the Ears and the Kine ſignifi'd the ſame thing, yet *Joſeph*'s Interpretation ſhows that neither was Superfluous, ev'n thoſe few that teach us nothing elſe, Teach us at leaſt the Importance (or ſome other Attribute,) of thoſe repeated Points we were taught before. And I ſcruple not to compare the Expreſſions of the Scripture to a Roſe, where though ſo many Leaves neerly reſemble each other, there's not one of them but contributes to the Beauty and Perfection of the Flower. *Gen.* 4. 25. 31.

The Sixth Objection.

Of Contradictions preſum'd betwixt Paſſages of Scripture.

I am not unacquainted with the קרי *Keri*, and the כתיב *Cethîb*: nor the תקון סופרים *Tikkûn Soph'rîm in the* Old Teſtament: Nor yet with the *Variæ Lectiones* (eſpecially thoſe of the *Eaſtern* and *Weſtern* Jews as they are call'd) taken notice of by Modern Criticks in

the *Hebrew* Text, of the Old, as well as in the *Greek* of the New Testament. I am not neither altogether a Stranger to the Difficulties to be met with in making good the Citations we find made of divers Texts of the Former of those Sacred Instruments in the Later: In which they seem not unfrequently to differ much from what we find existant in the ancient Testament, as to the Words, and sometimes too as to the Sense. These things, I say, though by some much urg'd against the Scripture, I am not ignorant of. But I think it not fit to consider them in this place; not only, because those that are much better qualified for such a Work than I, have done it already; but because these Objections relating rather to the Truth or the Authority than to the Style of the Scripture, the Nature of my present task does not oblige me to examine them. Especially, since I have already said something of them, and may say more, in what I write on the behalf of the Christian Religion. And 'tis upon these grounds, *Theophilus*, that I also decline at present the consideration of what is wont to be Objected, as if there were

were a great many Self-contradictions to be met with in the Scripture. Only I ſhall in the mean time invite you to take Notice with me, that 'tis not oftentimes ſo much the various Aſpects of the Texts, as the divers Prepoſſeſſions and Intereſts of the Expoſitors that make Books ſeem repleniſh'd with interfering Paſſages and Contradictions. For if once the Theme treated of do highly concern Men's Intereſts, let the Book be as Cleer as it can, ſubtile and engag'd Perſons on both ſides, peruſing it with Foreſtall'd Judgements or Byaſs'd Paſſions, will be ſure to wreſt many Paſſages to countenance their Prejudices, and ſerve their Ends, though they make the Texts never ſo fiercely fall out with one another, to reconcile them to their Partial Gloſſes. Of this I might produce an Eminent Inſtance in *Ariſtotle*'s Phyſical Writings, alledg'd by ſo many diſſenting Sects of School-men to countenance their jarring Opinions; the injur'd *Stagirite* (employ'd as Second by every one that quotes him) being by every Sect brought to Fight with its Antagoniſts, and by them all to give Battel to himſelf. Thus do

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the Dissenting Sects of *Mahumetans* quarrel as well about the Sense of their *Alcoran*, as we do about that of our Bible, and make the one as much a Nose of Wax, as the *Romist* Catholicks say we make the other. Which brings unto my mind, that not only the δυσνόητα τινα, the *Some things hard to be understood* in St. *Paul's* Epistles, but Also the λοιπαὶ γραφαὶ, The *Other Scriptures* are by St. *Peter* said to be by the *unlearned and unstable Wrested to their own Destruction*. When a sober Author finds an Impartial Reader, who takes his Words in their genuinely Obvious Acception, wherever the Context doth not manifestly force another on them, (in which then the Reader acquiesces) the Writer is easily understood: but when nimble and forestall'd Wits peruse an Author, not to sit down with His Sense, but to make him speak Theirs (whether it be his Own or no:) and giving themselves the Pains and Leasure of considering all the possible Acceptions of a Word or Phrase, and the Liberty of pitching upon that which best serves their Present turn, allow themselves to conclude, that because it May signifie

2 Pet. 3 16.

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ſo and ſo elſewhere, therefore it does ſo here; an Author muſt be much warier than *Homer* and *Virgil*, whom *Eudocia* and *Alexander Roſs* have made Evangeliſts, to keep his Words from being torture'd into a Confeſſion of what was never in his Thoughts. And a very pregnant inſtance of this Truth, we may obſerve in the Law of our Land, whoſe very End being to Prevent or Aboliſh Strifes; and which being Written ſo Punctually and Expreſly, and in ſo Peculiar and Barbarous a Style (clogg'd with ſupernumerary Repetitions) that nothing but their being conducive to ſo Good an End could make it Supportable; is yet by Mens concern'd Wits ſo miſconſtrued and perverted, that not onely in Private Mens Caſes, we ſee the Judges ſo puzzled that Sutes oftentimes out-laſt Luſtres; but the Prince's Party and the Subject's, Kill, and Execute one another; and (as Charity tempts me to preſume) think they may do ſo by the Law, and do ſo For the Law. In this belief, That we often impute to the Scripture our own Faults or Deficiencies, the Inſtances of thoſe Anti-ſcripturiſts I have converſ'd

Knowledge, as the other into Day.) And now Faith thus caſually preſents her ſelf in my Way, it will, perhaps, not be impertinent to obſerve, that Chriſt often deals with New Believers, as he is recorded to have done with *Nathaniel*; for as when that Guileleſs *Iſraelite* had acknowledg'd him the *Meſsias*, upon the bare Evidence of his having been diſcern'd by him under the Fig-Tree, our Bleſſed Saviour tells him, *Becauſe I ſaid unto thee, I ſaw thee under the Fig-Tree, believeſt thou? thou ſhalt ſee greater things than theſe*; (which in the next Verſe he proceeds to mention) So when men once have embrac'd the perſwaſion of the Scripture's being Divinely Inſpir'd, that Faith is a thing ſo acceptable to God, that he often diſcovers to them, to confirm them In their Belief, Arguments much clearer than thoſe that induc'd them To it; and convinces them of the Reaſonableneſs of having ſubmitted their Reaſon to him that gave it them. And, (as if there were Myſteries in which Faith doth more proſperouſly make way for Underſtanding, than That is ſet awork to introduce

John 1. 50.

Faith:

Faith:) it happens to them as it did to the two Blind-men mention'd in the Gospel; in whom our Saviour first requir'd Faith; and (having found That, he) then Open'd their Eyes. Matth. 9. 27, &c.

The seventh Objection.

From the (not long since mention'd) frequent Repetitions to be met with in the Scripture, and from the unusual Method wherein the Author of it has thought fit that the Divine Truths and Precepts should be extant there, Divers have been pleas'd to take occasion to Criminate the Bible, as if, its Bulk consider'd, it were but a barren Book, wherein Instructions are but sparingly scatter'd in comparison of what is to be met with in divers other Writings, where Repetitions are avoided, and more of usefull Matter is deliver'd in fewer Words. And hence it is (say these Objectors) that many Persons unquestionably Religious, choose rather to study Other Books of Devotion and Morality, as containing more full and Instructive Precepts of Good Life.

I might Answer this Allegation by repre-

repreſenting, that the ſeveral Particulars whereon the Accuſation is grounded, having been already examin'd by me, I need not ſay any thing diſtinctly to this Accumulative Charge. But becauſe I would not only Defend my Veneration for the Scripture, but Perſwade it, I ſhall on this occaſion offer two or three things to Conſideration.

Although then the Scripture were leſs repleniſh'd with Excellent Doctrines, and were but, as well as the beſt of other Books, like Mines, in the richeſt of which the Golden Oar is mingl'd with ſtore of leſs precious Materials, (and needs a laborious ſeparation from them;) yet ſure it would, like thoſe Mines, deſerve to be carefully digg'd in: and 'twill become the gratefull Chriſtians Zeal to imitate him in the Parable, who having found *a Treaſure hid in a Field*, ſtuck at no Price within his Power, to purchaſe the whole Field for the Treaſures ſake.

Mat. 13. 44.

But God be prais'd, this is not the Caſe, for 'tis onely our Ignorance, our Lazineſs, or our Indevotion, that keeps us from diſcovering, that the Scrip-

Scripture is ſo far from being, as the Objectors would have it, a Wilderneſs or a barren Soyl, that it may be much more fitly compar'd to that bleſs'd Land of Promiſe, which is ſo often ſaid in Scripture to be *flowing with Milk and Honey*, things Uſeful and Delightful; if not to Paradiſe it ſelf, of which 'tis ſaid, that there *the Lord God made to grow every Tree that is pleaſant to the ſight, and good for food, the Tree of Life alſo in the midſt of the Garden.* And indeed, as the Author of it was Omniſcient, ſo Experience has taught that he has ſo much expreſſed himſelf to be ſo in the Scripture, that the more Knowing its Pious Studiers have been, the greater ſtore of Excellent Truths they have met with in it; the Scripture being indeed like Heaven, where the better our Eyes and Teleſcopes are, the more Lights we diſcover. And that this may not appear to be ſaid *gratis*, let us conſider, that a Book may be Inſtructive, as well by teaching its Readers Speculative Truths as Practical ones, and that Chriſtians ought as well to know what God would have us think of Him & of his Works, as what Gen. 2.9.

he would have them Do. Now as it is paſt Queſtion that there are no Speculative Truths of ſo Noble and Elevated a Nature as thoſe that have God himſelf for their Object, ſo there is no Book from whence there is ſo much to be Learn'd, as there is from the Bible, of the Nature, and ev'n the Thoughts of God, and of thoſe deep Myſteries into which, as I formerly noted from
1 *Pet.* 1. 12. St. *Peter*, the Angels themſelves are greedy of Pr;ing. Nay, there is no other Book whatſoever that Teaches us any thing at all, concerning divers of theſe ſublime Subjects, that may be ſafely Rely'd on, ſave in what it is beholden to the ſcripture for. So that we cannot without an extreme Injury look upon that Book as Barren, which alone contains all thoſe reveal'd Truths, which are of ſo Noble and Precious a Nature, that we juſtly prize the Compoſures of Heathen Philoſophers, and other Authors, for being enrich'd with Gueſſes at ſome Few of them, though much embas'd by the Alloy whereto the Truths conjecturally deliver'd are made liable from the Imperfections of Writers, alwayes Fallible and for the moſt part in ſome degree

degree or other actually Erroneous. But of this more perchance elſewhere. Wherefore I ſhall now add, that whereas thoſe we reaſon with, are pleas'd to prefer other Books of Morality and Devotion before the Scripture, in reference to good Life; They would probably be of another Mind, if they duely conſider'd, that to engage Men to live well and Holily, there is much more Requiſite than barely to tell them that they Ought to do ſo, and How they ſhould do it. For ſince to lead a life truly vertuous, requires in many Caſes that we Deny, and Overcome our Natural Appetites and Inclinations, and requires alſo Conſtancy in a courſe that is confeſſedly wont to be attended with many Hardſhips and Dangers, it is not ſufficient to engage a Man to a Good life to give him Precepts of it; which do not ſo much (what is yet the main thing in this Caſe) Make men willing to conform to ſuch Precepts, as Suppoſe them ſo. And he that can do no more, does far leſs than Him, who beſides the Rules of good life, preſents men the Higheſt, and the moſt prevalent Motives to embrace Piety and

Virtue, and the moſt Powerful Diſſwaſives from all that is Wicked, by propoſing to us ſuch Rewards and Puniſhments, and ſatisfying us, that we ought, according as we behave our ſelves, to expect either the one, or the other; as to convince us that we cannot be either Wiſe or Happy, but by being Good, nor avoid the greateſt of Miſeries, but by avoiding Vice. Now as we ſhall ſee anon, that as to the Precepts of good life, the Bible is not unfurniſh'd with them, ſo as to that moſt Operative part of the way of Teaching good life, the propoſing of the moſt Prevalent Motives to Good, and the moſt powerful Diſſwaſives from Evil; not onely no other Book Does, but no Book not inſpir'd, Can perform in that kind, any thing near ſo much as the Scripture alone. Since we have not the ſame Reaſon to believe any Meer Man, as we have to believe God touching thoſe Rewards and Puniſhments which he reſerves after Death for thoſe that conform to, or diſobey his Laws; theſe being Matters which, (whatever Philoſophers and other Learned Men may have thought to the contrary,) depend upon his free

Will,

Will, and consequently are not to be explicitely Known, but by his Revelation; which he has not, that appears, vouchsaf'd us in any other Book than the Scripture. And therefore 'tis not to be wondr'd at, that St. *Paul* should ascribe it to our Saviour Christ, *That he had brought Life and Immortality to light through the Gospel.* And whereas Hope is that Spur without which Men do scarce ever cheerfully Undertake, & resolutely Go Through, things much less difficult and dangerous than those which a Virtuous course of life is wont to expose men to, *St. Peter* makes a Christians highest Hope to depend upon a Revealed Truth, where he gives thanks to God for having, *according to his abundant Mercy, begot us to a lively Hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead.* And what Influence such a knowledge of God and Christ, as, if we have it at all, we must owe to the Scripture, and such Hopes and Promises as none but God himself, or those He sends, can give a wary and intelligent Person, may have upon good life, you may guess by that other Passage of the same Apostle, where not onely he mentions Gods having *according*

2 *Tim.* *ch.* 1. *v.* 10.

1 Pet. 1. 3

2 Pet. 1. 3, 4. *cording to his Divine Power* (or Efficacy) *given unto us all things that pertain unto Life and Godlineſs through the Knowledge of him that hath called us to Glory and Virtue*, But alſo immediately after ſpeaks of our being made *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, and *eſcaping the Corruption that is in the World through Luſt*, by thoſe exceeding great and precious Promiſes that are given of God unto us. So that although the Scripture did not expreſly give us ſuch Moral Documents as Ethical Writers do, and taught us good life but by acquainting us with what God has reveal'd in thoſe Writings concerning himſelf, and by convincingly propoſing to us thoſe higheſt Inducements to Embrace a Good, and Shun an Evil Life, which (though Reaſon may perchance make ſome weak and confus'd Gueſſes at them,) Revelation onely can make Examining men confidently Depend upon. If, I ſay, the Scripture did no more than thus Engage us to Reſolve upon a good life, leaving us to derive the Particular Precepts of Virtue from the inward Dictates of the Law of Nature, and the Exerciſe of our own Reaſon (which

(which two together may well teach us Almoſt as much as Ethical Books are wont to teach, of really and conſiderably Uſefull) the Scripture ought yet to be eſteem'd a moſt inſtructive Book in reference to Good Life! As in effect we ſee, that the Writings of no Philoſopher or Orator ever made any thing near ſo many Perſons ſo Virtuous as the New Teſtament, though but a Pocket Book, has been able to do, eſpecially in thoſe Primitive Ages of the Church, when thoſe that receiv'd that Book were leſs diverted from it than ſince they have been, by the Reading of others. The Moon may in clear Weather lend a Gardiner Light enough to digg, and manure his Orchard, and perhaps to prune his Trees, but none will ſay that the Moon does as much contribute to his labouring to produce fruit as the Sun; ſince this Nobler Planet not only affords him Light to work by, and a comfortable Warmth whilſt he is working, but animates him by the hopes he cheriſhes upon the Suns account, that in due Seaſon his Diligence and Toyls ſhall be rewarded. The Application is too Obvious to need to be inſiſted on.

But though upon the fore-mention'd Accounts alone, the Scripture would deſerve to be look'd upon as highly Conducive to the Practice of Piety, and Virtue, yet it is far from being true, that it is deſtitute of ſuch Moral Documents, which it needs not, to deſerve to be look'd upon as a Book very Inſtructive in Reference to good Life: For there being Two ſorts of Virtues requiſite to an Embracer of the Goſpel, which have been conveniently enough call'd for Diſtinction ſake, the one Chriſtian, and the other Moral, or Ethical; I ſuppoſe it will not be doubted but that the Rules of thoſe Virtues that are properly Chriſtian, muſt be ſought for in the Scripture, that being acknowledg'd by Proteſtants to have ſuch a ſufficiency as to matters of meer *Revelation*, (which Reſtriction too many do inconſiderately enough leave out) that in Matters of that Nature, Divines often Do, and in many Caſes May, argue Negatively, as well as Affirmatively from the Scripture; which Eaſes us of many things obtruded as Duties, meerly by its not, either expreſly, or by conſequence, Impoſing them upon us. So that as

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to things of this Nature; there is ſuch a Fulneſs in that Book, that oftentimes it ſays Much by ſaying Nothing, and not only its Expreſſions but its Silences are Teaching, (like a Dyal, in which the Shadow as well as the Light informs us.) Nor muſt we think, that the Bible is deſtitute of the Beſt ſort of ſuch Precepts, Exhortations, and Diſſwaſives, as we prize in Ethical Books, becauſe they are not Expreſs'd and Rang'd in the Bible, as they are wont to be in Syſtematical Compoſures; For not only there is extant in the Scripture, to them that know how to Conſtellate thoſe Lights, a very excellent Body of Moral Precepts, but there are likewiſe ſcatter'd the forcibleſt Motives to the ſeveral Duties, and the moſt retracting Diſſwaſives from the contrary Vices. And truly, it hath long leſſen'd my Eſteem of our Heathen Morals, that the Ethicks being but the Doctrine of Regulating our Paſſions and Directing our Faculties, in order to the Attainment of Felicity, they have been hitherto handl'd by thoſe, to whom the Nature of the Faculties and Paſſions of the Mind was but very little known:

Whereas

VVhereas to the Author of the Scripture-Morals, the Frame and Springs, and Faculties of our ſouls, being Intuitively and moſt perfectly known; the moſt proper and Powerfull wayes of VVorking on them, cannot be unknown to him: and then certainly, one unacquainted with the Trade, will be much leſs likely to mend a VVatch, that's out of order, than a VVatch-maker. And indeed, ev'n in reference to that other ſort of Virtues which are wont in the more confin'd ſenſe of the VVord to be call'd Morall, there are I know not how Many excellent Notions and Directions relating to them, diſpers'd up and down in the Scripture, though by Reaſon of their not being drawn up by themſelves, and of their being mingl'd with other Matters, they are not ſo readily taken notice of by Ordinary Readers. VVhereas, thoſe Studious Peruſers that *ſearch the Scriptures* with a due Diligence and Attention, are not only wont eaſily enough to deſcry the Moral Counſels and Preſcriptions over-look'd by the other Readers; but take notice of many excellent Documents that are plainly enough Intimated or hinted there,

there, to knowing and diligent Perusers, though not clearly and expresly enough to be found of those that think them not worth seeking.

VVherefore, as to those Religious Persons mention'd in the last propos'd Objection, I cannot but think, that by neglecting the Scripture for Ethical Compositures, or even Books of Devotion, they as well wrong Themselves as the Scripture; And therefore I shall take leave to think the worse, rather of the Practice of the Men, than of the Book of God. Scarce any thing has given me a favourabler Character of *Luther*, than his VViſh, that all his Books of Devotion were burnt, when he once perceiv'd that the Peoples fondness and Over-valuation of them produc'd a Neglect of the study of the Bible; to which you will find, *Theophilus*, that the best of that Nature being compar'd, are but (not to draw to our present purpose that of *Seneca* to his Mother, *Paribus intervallis omnia Divina, ab omnibus Humanis distant*) like the Stars compar'd to the Sun, whose Emanations confer on them their Lustre, but whose Presence drowns it: For though I deny not Books of Devotion

Seneca de Consol. ad *Helviam.* cap. 9.

Devotion a due Degree of Praiſe and Uſefulneſs, yet I refuſe them the Superlative degree of either; and ſince the Writers of the beſt of that kind of Compoſures, either ſteal their beſt things from, or acknowledge that they Borrow'd them of the Bible, I would not have Chriſtians neglect the Fountain for the Streams, and unwiſely, as well as unthankfully, elect to Read Gods Word, rather in any Book than his own, in which to encourage us to ſtudy the Precepts of a Virtuous and Holy Life, we have ſuch Peculiar and encouraging Invitations. —— Saint *Paul* ſeems to make it the (End and the) Reſult of the ſeveral Uſefulneſſes he attributes to the Scripture, *That it can make the Man of God perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all Good Works; and is able,* (as he ſpeaks a little higher) *Σοφίσαι εἰς σωτηρίαν, to Make us wiſe unto Salvation.* There are indeed many Excellent Inſtructions given us in other Books; but they giving us Directions, only towards the Attainment of the Advantages, Conveniences, and Ornaments of Life; the Ignorance of them, only makes us miſs thoſe Particular Ends, Whereto they give Addreſſes,

ver. 15.

2 Tim. 3. 17.

dreſſes, or whereof they facilitate our Purſutes; but the Knowledge, whoſe Acquiſt, or Neglect, imports Endleſs Joys or Torments, we need ſeek only from the Scripture: a Chriſtian to underſtand the Duty of his Faith and Life, needing to underſtand no other Book than the Bible; though indeed to underſtand the Bible well, 'tis Ordinarily requiſite, that a pretty Number of other Books be underſtood. Chriſtians then have reaſon to Study moſt that Book, which Underſtood, all others are Needleſs to Salvation, and which Ignor'd, they are inſufficient. If Saint *Peters* Viſion had been a Reality, he would ſcarce, hungry as he was, have rang'd abroad to hunt in this Deſert or that Forreſt for Game, when he had a Veſſel let down to him from Heaven, containing in its ſelf all manner of four-footed Beaſts, and other Objects of Appetite, attended with a Commanding Invitation from Heaven, *Riſe*, Peter, *Kill, and Eat*. So when God ſends us from Heaven in one Volume, an, at leaſt Virtual, Collection of all thoſe Divine Truths and Holy Precepts, others ſcatteringly and ſparingly glean out of Human Books; the

Acts 10. 11, 12, 13.

Chriſtian

Christians cannot but prize a Book so Comprehensive, which by making it safe for him to ignore others, by so merited an *Antonomasia*, wears the Title of *The Book*, (for so the Bible signifies in Greek, as the *Hebrews* call it *Mikra*, which by Excellence signifies *what's to be Read.*) —— —— ——

Mikra, Lectio.

There are Precepts enough of Virtue, and Motives enough to Conform to them, held forth in the Bible, if the Contents of that Divine Book were Believ'd and Consider'd as they ought to be. 'Tis a mistake to think, that a large System of Ethicks, dissected according to the nice Prescriptions of Logick, and Methodically repleniſh'd with Definitions, Divisions, Distinctions, and Syllogisms, is Requisite or Sufficient to make men Virtuous. Too many of our Moralists write as if they thought Virtue could be taught as easily, and much in the same VVay, as Grammar: and leaving our Rational Motives to Vertue, and Determents from Vice, with other things that have a Genuine Influence on the Minds and Manners of men, they fall to wrangle about the Titles and Precedencies of the Parts of Ethical Philosophy,

losophy, and things extrinsecal enough to Vice and Virtue: they spend more time in asserting their Method, than the Prerogatives of Virtue above Vice; they seem more follicitous how to order their Chapters than their Readers actions; and are more Industrious to impress their Doctrine on our Memories, than our Affections, and teach us better to dispute Of our Passions than VVith them. Whereas, as the Condition of a Monarch, who is possess'd but of one Kingdome or Province, is preferrable to that of a Geographer, though he be able to Discourse Theorically of the Dimensions, Situation, and Motion; or Stability of the whole Terrestrial Globe; to carve it into Zones, Climates and Parallels, to enumerate the various Names and Etymologies of its various Regions, and give an Accompt of the Extent, the Confines, the Figure, the Divisions, &c. of all the Dominions and Provinces of it: so the Actual Possession of one Virtue, is preferrable to the bare speculative Knowledge of them all. Their Master *Aristotle* hath herein been more plain and less Pedantick; who (by the favour of his Interpreters)

ters) hath not been Nice in the Method of his Ethicks. And indeed, but little Theory is essentially requisite to the being Virtuous, provided it be duely understood, and cordially put in practice: Reason and Discretion sufficing, analogically to extend and apply it to the Particular Occurrences of Life; (which otherwise being so near Infinite, as to be Indefinite, are not so easily specifiable in Rules:) as the View of the Single Pole-starr directs the heedfull Pilot, in almost all the Various Courses of Navigation. And the Systems of Moralists may (in this particular) not unfitly be compar'd to Heaven, where there are Luminaries and Stars obvious to all Eyes, that diffuse Beams sufficient to Light us in most wayes; And as I that with Modern Astronomers, by an Excellent Telescope, have beheld perhaps near a hundred Stars in the Pleiades, where common Eyes see but six; and have often discern'd in the Milky-way, and other pale parts of the Firmament, Numberless little Stars generally unseen, receive yet from Heav'n no more Light useful to Travel by, than other Men enjoy: so there are certain

Grand

Grand Principles and Maxims in the Ethicks, which both are generally Conſpicuous, and generally afford men much Light and much Direction; but the Numerous little Notions, (admit them Truths) ſuggeſted by Scholarſhip to Ethical Writers, and by them to us, though the Speculation be not unpleaſant, afford us very little peculiar Light to guide our Actions by. When I remember thoſe Antient *Heroes*, that have ennobled Secular, and are ennobled by Sacred Story; and whoſe Examples ſuggeſted the Precepts of Virtue, before there were any Written ones to conform to; I am tempted to ſay, that Virtue was ſcarce ever better practis'd, than whilſt men had not yet talk'd of the Definition of it: (as many an Alchymiſt beggs with rare Notions of the Nature of Gold, which fills the Coffers of Merchants that never ſaw Mine nor Furnace.) The Grand Precepts of Morality are fruitfull Seeds, which induſtriouſly Cultivated, will bring forth Fruits ſtill affording other Seeds. And as for the Motives to Pious, and Diſſwaſions from ſinful Practices, though out of the Many voluminous Books of

Morality, there may be divers collected, not extant in the Bible; yet may a dextrous Reader find in that Heav'nly Book, many more Invitations to Virtue, and Determents from Vice, than moſt men are aware of; and ſome of them of an Importance that renders One of them as much more conſiderable than many Ordinary ones, as One fair Pearl out of a Jewellers Shop, out-values a ſcore of thoſe little Pearls that Druggiſts ſell by the Ounce; or doth comprize many Inferior Inducements, (which Wiſe men judge not of by Tale but Value) as a Piece doth twenty Shillings. And though Human Authors do often in their Parenetical Treatiſes allow themſelves to be laviſh in Ornaments, to expatiate into Amplifications, and to drein Common-places; yet whilſt they want an intimate Admiſſion, all theſe are too often unable to reform, I ſay not thoſe that Read them, but ev'n thoſe that Write them: whereas the Experience of the Primitive and Heroical Ages of the Church, does glorioufly manifeſt, that the Inducements and Diſſwaſives held forth in the Bible, though deſtitute of thoſe Embelliſhments and Advantages,

vantages, where they are Conſcionably entertain'd, and Seriouſly ponder'd, are ſufficient to raiſe Virtue to a Pitch, Philoſophy durſt ſcarcely aim at. Nor indeed is the number Great, of pertinant and Rational Incitements, or Determents, relating to Virtue; and in Diſcourſes that have Them for Theme, how farr ſoever the Bowes may extend, yet generally the Knot lyes in a little Compaſs: and the Analyſer that ſhall crack many of thoſe Compoſures, having ſever'd the Shels, ſhall find their Kirnells to be much alike. What this Writer compares to one thing, that Writer likens to another: thoſe Ungratefull Perſons to God, that one reſembles to Swine, who eat the Acorns without ever looking up to the Tree they fall from, another compares to Cattel that drink of the Streams, without conſidering what Fountain they flow from. Theſe but preſent us ſeveral Dreſſes of Virtue and Vice, where though the Novelty and Variety of Habit, ſerve to engage Attention in all, and want not Influence (at leaſt) npon Eaſie and flexible Natures, yet in Conſiderate and diſcerning Perſons, they alter not much

the Notion under which the Qualities themſelves are entertaind. Nor will ſuch be apt to quarrel with the Author of the Scripture; becauſe the Motives and Diſſwaſives extant there, are many of them Old and Known, or frequently Repeated; the efficacy of them being ſo too. Were it not ſtrange, a Phyſician ſhould decline exhibiting of Mithridate, becauſe 'twas a Known Medicine, and famous for its Cures many Ages ſince? Doth Bread leſs Nouriſh us, or is it leſs Us'd, becauſe 'twas (as men ſuppoſe) contemporary to *Adam*, and the moſt Common food of all Nations in all Ages? and (as to the Repetition of the ſame Allegations and Inducements, as often as Men's Condition return'd to need them) the Paucity of ponderous Conſiderations in the Ethicks, often neceſſitating either (Diſguiz'd perhaps, yet) Repetitions of the ſame, or the ſubſtitution of thoſe that muſt be much Inferiour to be New; ſuch Perſons as little admire that reiterated Employment of the ſame Truths, as they would to ſee a Souldier uſe a Sword, though he and Legions many Ages before him, have conſtantly made moſt uſe of that Weapon;

Weapon, or a General encourage his Engaging Souldiers by repreſenting to them Honour, Duty, Spoil, Neceſſity, and thoſe other known Topicks us'd by himſelf at the Head of his Army, as often as he had occaſion to lead it on to fight. To all this I am invited by this occaſion to ſubjoyn, that upon the ſcore of Gods being both an Omniſcient Spirit and the ſupreme Law-giver to the whole Creation, the ſame Truths, Counſels, Exhortations, Diſſwaſions, &c. Oftentimes Have, and Always Ought to have, another-gheſs Efficacy, and Prevalence on a Chriſtian Reader, when he finds them in the Scripture, than if he ſhould meet with the ſame in the Books of Heathen Moraliſts, though Learned and Eloquent. And certainly, thoſe that with ſuch Reverence read the Writings of thoſe great Wits of Antiquity, that have made the greateſt Diſcoveries of Truth, becauſe they believe them, to have been endowed with very Illuminated Intellectuals, ought to pay them and a Book publiſhed by an Omniſcient Enditer, a Reverence ſomewhat proportionate to the Diſparity of their Authors. Since Men (as

Eliha ſpeaks in *Job*) *are but of yeſterday, and know little or nothing*; A wary Perſon reads the Wiſeſt Authors, with a Reflection, that they may Deceive him by being themſelves deceiv'd; and undergoes a Double labour, the one in Inveſtigating the Meaning, and the other in Examining the Truth of what they deliver: but in the Bible, we are eas'd of the latter of theſe Troubles; for if we find the Senſe of a Text of Scripture, we cannot miſs a Truth; being never deceiv'd by that Book, but when we deceive our ſelves by preſuming we underſtand it, when indeed we do not. I am otherwiſe affected to find the Vanity of the World proclaim'd and depretiated by him, that enjoy'd all the Delights and Glories of it, than when I meet with the ſame Truth from ſome Beggerly Cynick, that never was admitted to taſt thoſe luſcious and bewitching Pleaſures, and needs no great Philoſophy to deſpiſe a World, he judges of by the ſcant ſhare the Narrowneſs of his Condition allows him of the Joyes of it: and of which (conſequently) his Criminations ſhould as little move, as a Blindman's

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of a Black-more; whom though he may (perchance) Truly ſtyle ugly, yet he were of a ſomewhat eaſie Faith, that ſhould think her ſo, barely upon the Teſtimony of ſo incompetent a Witneſs. Thus when God himſelf is pleas'd to reveal what is Vice or Virtue, Sublime or Deſpicable, Truth or Falſhood, Happineſs or Miſery, I have an other-gueſs Acquieſcence in his Deciſions, than in the ſame met with in an humane Author, who having neceſſarily Frailties and Paſſions, is both obnoxious to Miſtake, and capable to Deceive. And therefore, 'tis no wonder that the ſlighting of God's Dictates, ſhould receive an Aggravation upon the ſcore of their being His; as our Saviour gave the Precedency of the *Ninivites* convetted by *Jonah*, to them that repented not at his Preaching, becauſe he was *A greater than Jonah*. And therefore, though I have formerly been no very negligent Peruſer of Books of Morality; yet knowing that they have a Power but to Perſwade, not to Command, and that the Penalties of Sin or Death are not inſeparably annext to the Diſobedience of their Preſcriptions, I confeſs, Mat. 12. 42.

I often find my ſelf but faintly wrought on by them. For I muſt acknowledge, that frequently aſſuming the Liberty of queſtioning the Reaſonableneſs of what Human Writers, (whether Philoſophers or Fathers) are pleas'd to impoſe upon us; I find thoſe ſpecious and boaſted Allegations, the Apothegms of the Sages, the Placits of the Philoſophers, the Examples of Eminent Perſons, the pretty Similes, quaint Allegories, and quick Sentences of fine Wits, I find all theſe Topicks I ſay, ſuch two-edg'd Weapons, that they are as well applicable to the ſervice of Falſhood, as of Truth, and may by ready Wits be brought Equally to countenance Contrary Aſſertions. And really, moſt Moraliſts, except in thoſe few Duties, that Nature her ſelf hath fore-taught us, to a man whoſe reſtleſs Curioſity leads his Enquiries to all Times and Nations; will appear little other than Fencers with Wit, (I mean thoſe that have any) for each of theſe Popular Topicks, is ſuch an Unſolid or incertain Foundation, that one man can Build little on it, that an equally able Antagoniſt may not with as ſpe-

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cious Probability Over-throw? and I fear, moſt of us have but too often found our Corruptions Sophiſters enough to elude any ſuch thing that preſs'd That as a Duty, which They had no mind we ſhould perform. But when I find any thing enjoyn'd in the Scripture, my Conſciouſneſs to its being impos'd by that *Father of Spirits*, (who has both Right to enact Laws, which muſt be therefore Juſt, becauſe he enacts them; and Power to puniſh the Tranſgreſſion of them, with no leſs than Eternal Death;) I then leave Roving, and ſee where to caſt Anchor; I think it my part without Diſputing them to Obey his Orders, and acquieſce more in that imperious αὐτὸς ἔφη, *Thus ſaith the Lord*, than in a whole Dialogue of *Plato*, or an Epiſtle of *Seneca* I therefore love to build my Ethicks, (as well as my Creed) upon the Rock, and eſteeming nothing but the true, proper, and ſtrict ſenſe of the Scripture, (and what is convincingly deducible from it) to be indiſpenſably Obligatory, either as (in matters of meer Revelation) to Faith or Practice; it is no wonder, if I ſtudy God's Will moſt in that Book, wherein alone Heb. 12. 9.

alone I think it Reveal'd; and, truly, finding in my self no Motive more justly prevalent to Obedience, than his Right to exact it that requires it; few men are more ready than I, in distinguishing what indeed God sayes, from what Man would make him say. And if I allow my self such liberty to discern the Text from the Gloss, in the Writings of our Vulgar Interpreters, (of most of whose Comments, for reasons prosecuted in another Paper, I am no great Idolater) and ev'n of the Fathers of the Church; I hope I shall not need to tell, *Theophilus*, that in all other Moralists I like the freedome to Like or Disapprove, as upon Examination, my impartialest Reason relishes them; or that I frequently fear, their Harangues will hardly pass for Demonstrations, with those Wary Testers, that like not to be Cheated, so much as into Virture, but chuse to act as Rational or Christians, as well in relation to the Inducements, as to the Nature of what they do.

——— Amongst the thirteen Articles of the Jewish Creed, one acknowledges the very Expressions of the Law, (or Pentateuch) to

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have been inſpir'd by God. That ſaying of the Rabbins is not altogether ſo Hyperbolical, as a perfunctory Reader would imagine, That upon each Tittle of the Law, whole Mountains (of Doctrine) hang. I ſhall not mention as any proof of this, the ſtrange Myſteries they fancy in the ſtrange Accenting of the Ten Commandments in the Original, ſince their ſoberer Doctors have in free Diſcourſe confeſs'd to me, that 'tis as much a Riddle to Them as Us. Nor ſhall I inſiſt upon the Jews reducing the whole Law to 613. Precepts, Affirmative and Negative, according to the Number of the Letters of the Decalogue, thereby inſinuating, that all the Laws that regulate Mans Duty are Virtually or Reductively compriz'd there. Although this Rabbinical Notion, (not to call it Whimſey,) be in ſuch Requeſt among them, and ſo Known to thoſe that are any thing converſant in Jewiſh Authors, that I have ſometimes ſuſpected that the Conceit entertain'd by ſo many Chriſtian Divines, that All the Precepts that relate to any part of the whole Duty of man, are but juſt Conſequences deducible from the Decalogue,

calogue, had its Riſe thence. But I ſhall not, as I ſaid, ground my Opinion of the Pregnant inſtructiveneſs of the Scripture, upon ſuch Queſtionable, not to ſay altogether Proofleſs, Conceits. That which may better perſwade a conſidering Man, is, that beſides thoſe more Reſplendent and Obvious Truths, wherewith the Scriptures does evidently abound, There are many Inſtructions Exhibited, many Truths aſſerted, many Errors confuted, and many Myſteries hinted in the very Expreſſions of holy Writ, to an Inquiſitive and concern'd Peruſer, which a Heedleſs vulgar Reader is not wont to take Notice of. God, who in the Scripture is ſaid, *to cover himſelf with Light as with a Garment*, juſtifies that Expreſſion in the Scripture, where (as the firſt Words that he is recorded to have ever ſpoken were יהי אור Yehi-or, *Let there be Light*) the very Words and Phraſes, that cloath the ſenſe, are not alone Emphatical, but oftentimes Myſterious. The Apoſtle aſſures us, *whatſoever things were written*, ev'n in the Old Teſtament, *were written, for our Learning*: But yet beſides thoſe many particular Sentences of the Bible,

Pſal. 104. 2.

Gen. 1. 3.

Rom. 15. 4.

that

that are not Deſtitute of Inſtructions, there are ſome ſo Pregnant with them, that we may eaſily find this Difference betwixt Them and Human Writings, That thoſe firſt mention'd contain more Matter than Words, and the Other more Words than Matter. Nay, many of the very Flowers of Rhetorick growing there, have (like the Mary-gold that in hot Countries points at the Sun) a Virtue of hinting the uſefulleſt and the ſublimeſt Truths: the Bible being in this like the Tree of Life, (flouriſhing in the New *Jeruſalem*) which not only afforded ſeaſonable fruit, but of which the very *Leaves were for the healing of the Nations*. Rev. 22. 2. As for thoſe, who have in this and the laſt Age made bold to depreciate the Old Teſtament, by pretending, that to Chriſtians, the New is ſufficient; I am at preſent apt to think, that the Doctrine of the Goſpel, together with the Light of Nature, (which it Excludes not) but rather Suppoſes, contains all thoſe Duties which are abſolutely Neceſſary to be perform'd by all Chriſtians, in order to Salvation. And that conſequently, many Divines both Catholicks and Reformed, do inconſiderately enough

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preſs many things enacted in the Old Teſtament, as Laws properly ſo call'd which are not now upon the Score of their being There enacted, Obligatory to Us Chriſtians, nor perhaps ever were to any but the Jews and ſome kind of Jewiſh Proſelytes. But I think withall, that though it be hard to ſhew that any thing is a Neceſſary Duty to Chriſtians, in the ſenſe above declar'd, if it cannot be ſhewn to be ſo either by the New Teſtament, or the Light of Nature: Yet not only there are many Particulars relating to ſuch Duties, of which the Old Teſtament may excellently aſſiſt us to give our ſelves a more Diſtinct and Explicit Inſtruction, than is eaſie to be collected from the New; but of the Myſteries of our Religion, there are many things deliver'd more Expreſly or more Fully in ſome Paſſages of the Old Teſtament, than in any of the Goſpel, as I could eaſily evidence, if I thought it requiſite. So that the uſe of it is very Great, as to the *Credenda* in Divinity, though not perhaps abſolutely Neceſſary as to the *Agenda*. But I conſider further, that both the Matters and the Expreſſions made uſe of in the Old Teſtament,

Teſtament, are ſo very frequently and almoſt upon all Occaſions related to in the New, (as if the Wiſdom of God were like Rivers and Seas that affect to flow in the ſame Channels themſelves had made before) that there is ſcarce a Page of the Latter, to the better Underſtanding of which the Study of the Former is not either abſolutely Neceſſary, or at leaſt highly Uſefull. Should God be pleas'd to Inſtruct us as he did *Jonas*, by the Shadow of a Weed, 'twere our Duty to acquieſce; how much more then, when he vouchſafes to ſpeak to us in almoſt as Glorious a Manner as he did to *Moſes*; in a Scripture that hath ſuch Reſemblances to the Sanctuary, which contain'd the Law of God, exhibited the Mercy-ſeat, (the Type of Chriſt) and wherein the two Golden Cherubims, like the two Pretious and Harmonious Teſtaments, look'd towards one another, and both towards that Mercy-ſeat, that Typify'd the *Meſsias*? We ſhould therefore, not only with Acquieſcence, but Gratitude, look upon God's having Appointed the Scripture to be the Light in which his Spirit regularly Shines upon his Church; ſince the Luminary

Jonah 4. 6.

Exod. 25. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

is

is as well Refulgent, as the Choice of it, His, whose Blessing can Prosper any Means of Grace, as without his Blessing no Means of Grace can Prosper.

And, *Theophilus*, since among those that are so farr mistaken, as to postpose the study of the Bible to that of some applauded Books of Morality and Devotion, there are not wanting divers Persons otherwise eminently Religious; I hope you will easily excuse me, if for fear their Example should prove a Temptation to you, and add to the Discouragements you must expect from the Darkness of some Texts, and the Opposition that will be given you; especially at first, by the grand Enemy to the Author and Design of the Scripture, I venture to superadd to all that I have said already concerning these Mens Practice, That 'tis not onely a Commendable, but a much more Improving Custome than 'tis by many thought, to Read daily and orderly some set Portion or Chapters of the Bible: and not to desist from that Practice, though (as *Naaman* dipped himself six times in *Jordan*, without being Cur'd) we should not perceive a sudden and sensible Benefit accruing from

2 *Kings* 5. 14.

from it. For in Diſeaſes (Bodily or Spiritual) though the Mouth be out of Taſt, and cannot reliſh what is taken in, yet wholeſome Aliments muſt be eaten, and do effectively Nouriſh and ſtrengthen, though they be then Inſipid, (perhaps Bitter) to the diſtemper'd Palate. We muſt with the Eunuch Read divers Texts we Underſtand not when we read them; and though at firſt we be not able to penetrate the ſenſes of ſome Portions of Gods Word, we muſt at leaſt make our Faculties as Hoſpitable to it as we can; and make our Memories Admit and Embrace it, till our Underſtandings be grown up to do the like: it becoming the Diſciples of our Saviour, herein to imitate His Holy Mother; of whom 'tis written, that *They* (the Bleſſed Virgin and her Husband) *underſtood not the Sayings which he ſpake unto them,—— but His Mother kept all theſe Sayings in her Heart*; and to think it may very well be, that as our Saviour ſaid to *Peter, What I do, thou knoweſt not now, but thou ſhalt know hereafter*; ſo by the Welcome he diſpoſes you to give his Word into your Memory, he ſays to you, *What I*

Act. 8. 30. 31.

Luk 2. 50, 51. ſee v. 18, 19. Joha 13. 7.

ſay thou knoweſt not now, but thou ſhalt know hereafter: and the Apoſtles Motive to Hoſpitality, *Be not forgetful to entertain Strangers, for thereby ſome have entertained Angels unawares*, will without being over-ſtretch'd, take in the Texts of Scripture we are unacquainted with: for we may eaſily in them, entertain with *Abraham* and *Lot*, greater Gueſts than we were aware of: and who when their true Condition appears, may recompence our Entertainment of them, by ſhowring Bleſſings on us, and reſcuing us from the Company and Deſtiny of the Wicked. And ſure, if the Pagans layd up with aweful Reverence, thoſe Dark and Squinting Oracles, that came (at leaſt many of them) from the Prince of Darkneſs, and Father of Lies; we ſhould bluſh to refuſe attentive Peruſals, and Lodging in our Memories, to thoſe λόγια ζῶντα, thoſe *Lively Oracles*, thoſe λόγια τοῦ Θεοῦ, *Oracles of God* who is *the Father of Lights*, and an Eſſential Truth *That cannot Lye*. And the moſt ænigmatical Texts we meet with, which ſeem meant purpoſely to Poſe us, we may make uſeful Admonitors of our Weakneſſes, and

Heb. 13. 2.

Gen. 18. and *Gen.* 19.

Acts 7. 38. *Rom.* 3. 2. *James* 1. 17. *Tit.* 1. 2.

and take for welcome Opportunities, to evince how great a Reverence we pay God's Word, upon the ſingle Score of its being ſo. Nor let thoſe Diſturbances, with which the Devil ſeldom fails to obſtruct or diſcourage our firſt Progreſs in a Study, ſo ruinous to his malicious Ends upon us, deterr us; for theſe are commonly but the Throws and ſtruglings of *Chriſt* new *formed in us*; or elſe like thoſe horrid Fits and Out-cryes which preceded the Ejection of that Unclean Spirit mention'd in the firſt of *Mark*: ſuch Parting Ceremonies being not unuſual to the diſlodging Devil; who when he finds himſelf upon the Point of being expell'd, *Hath Great Wrath, becauſe he knoweth, he hath but a ſhort time. And though the God of Peace* how ever he *will bruiſe Satan under your feet ſhortly*: ſhould for a while Try us even with Deſertions in the Study of the Scripture; let us not for all that Deſert ſo Improving a Study, but reſolutely perſevere in the conſtant and faithful uſe of the Means of Grace: as the Moon when ſhe ſuffers an Eclipſe, forſakes not her Orb or Motion, but by continuing her unretarded

Mar. 1. 26.

Rev. 12. 12.

Rom. 16. 20.

Courſe, regains the Irraditions ſhe was depriv'd of. We find the Word of God compar'd to ſeed, (that deathleſs *Seed* by which Saint *Peter* ſaith we are *born again*) and That, we know may ſeem for a long time as well Dead as Buri'd in the ground, and yet afterwards ſpring and grow up into a plentiful Harveſt. Nor muſt our Proficiency any more diſpenſe with us, from the being converſant with the Scripture, than our Frailties: *I will never* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *forget thy Precepts, for with them thou haſt quickned me.* And indeed, the Word of God is not to be uſed like active Phyſick, taken Once that it may not be taken Again; but 'tis compar'd to Food, which indeed it is, of the Soul; in which Senſe it may be literally enough ſaid, *that Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God.* Now as our having fed never ſo well and heartily on excellent and Nutritive meats Yeſterday, will not keep us from needing to eat again To-day, or to-Morrow, and ſo Daily, as long as we continue in theſe ruinous *Cottages of Clay*; ſo in Spiritual refections with Full, without

Matt. 13. 19, 20, &c. *1 Pet.* 1. 2, 3.

Pſal. 119. 93.

1 Pet. 2. 2. and elſe-where.

Mat. 4. 4.

Job 4. 19.

Repeated

Repeated meals the Soul will ſcarcely thrive. And as, generally, the more Healthy and Luſty Men are, the frequenter and ſtronger Appetites they have; ſo the beſt Chriſtians, and (witneſs *David*) the greateſt Proficients in Scripture-Knowledge, have the keeneſt Stomachs to this Food of Souls; and the vigorouſeſt Piety, by a Deſuetude and Neglect of it, is ſubject to Faint and Pine away. Nor have we juſt cauſe to repine at any Engagement to Aſſiduity in the Scriptures: for there are not near ſo many things that will Require, as there are that will Deſerve and Recompence a ſerious Study in a Book; where both the ſtrict Senſe and the Circumſtances, and Expreſſions, that cloath it, are richly Inſtructive: like that Aromatical Fruit, of which not onely the Kernel is a Nutmeg, but the very involving Skinn is Mace. This inexhauſted Fulneſs, occaſion'd that Panegyrical Precept of the Rabbies concerning the Law; הפוך כה והפוך בה ארי כולי בה *Turn it over, and again turn it over, for All is in it:* Concurrently to which the Jew that Tranſlates the Arabian Apopthegms into Hebrew, thus

Τροφὴ ψυχῆς ἡ γραφή. *Athanaſ.*

Pirk avoth. cap. 5.

thus pronounces; *There proceedeth not a true Sentence out of the Mouths of this Worlds Wiſe-men, that is not intimated in our Law.*

The Uſefulneſs of Divers Texts, is ſuch, that we ſhould not onely have them in our Poſſeſſion, but in a Readineſs; and as *David* diſtreſs'd by his Mortal Enemies, took *Goliah*'s Sword from near the Ephod, to wear it whither ſoever he went; ſo Chriſtians proſecuted by Ghoſtly Enemies, ſhould be diligent, not onely to have an Armory well furniſhed with ſpiritual Weapons, but to wear this *Sword of the Spirit* always by their ſides, to Ward and Thruſt with upon all Occaſions; without needing to depend upon any ſuch things as Concordances, which often cannot be come by, and oftner, not Soon enough to keep us from being foy'ld by the Father or the Champions of Lies. But now, to engage us to grow ready Scripturiſts: it is not onely true, That as the Texts of the Bible interchange Light with one another, and every new Degree of Scripture-Knowledge, is not only an Acquiſt of ſo much, but an Inſtrument to acquire more; ſo is that

Epheſ. 6. 17.

Book

Book a Theme ſo Comprehenſive and ſo Fertile, that the laſt hour of a Chriſtians longeſt and induſtrioufeſt Life, will ſtill leave undiſcover'd Myſteries in it: This, I ſay, is not only true, but it is alſo true, That the Doctrines of it are of that Importance, and find that Oppoſition in our depraved Nature, that even thoſe Truths that require but few Peruſals to be underſtood, require many to be duly Impreſs'd. Our prepoſterouſly partial Memories, being rarely like Quick-ſilver, wherein nothing will ſink but (that pretiouſeſt of Metals,) Gold: for that alone is heavier than Mercury. *The Word of Chriſt*, muſt not be as a Paſſenger, or ſparingly entertain'd in our Minds, but muſt *Dwell* there, and that *Richly:* and the Word, which Saint *James* pronunces, *able to ſave our Souls*, he deſcribes as a Graff, which muſt not onely be cloſely embrac'd. By that, wherein it is to Fructifie, but muſt continue There, To bring the Stock and Graff to (if I may ſo ſpeak) Concorporate. And indeed, we are ſo indiſpos'd to Admit, and ſo obnoxious to Deface, Religious Impreſſions, that we need, during our whole Life, be

Col. 3. 16.

Jam. 1. 21

converſant with the Precepts of Leading it piouſly.——But 'tis ſcarce more Faulty in, than Incident to, the froward Nature of Man, to be ever Quarrelling with Gods Method of proſecuting his intentions; and, (as if he were Wiſer than his Maker,) to criminate his Conduct in his Diſpenſations. Even that Excellent Perſon, the Glorioufeſt of Virgins, and of Mothers, whom all Ages muſt deſervedly call *Bleſſed*, incurr'd her Divine Sons Reprehenſion, for an intimated offer to alter his purpoſed Method in Diſcloſing himſelf. But God is too Juſt to Himſelf, and too Merciful to Us, to Degrade (as it were) his Omniſcience ſo farr as to ſuffer himſelf to be ſway'd againſt the Dictates of it, by ſuch Purblind and perverſe Tutors as We; his Goodneſs concerns him too much in our Inſtruction, to ſuffer him to let our Phanſies endite his Word; to attain his own Ends, he makes choice of his own Means and Inſtruments, without needing our purblind Eyes in the Election, and what with unfathomable Wiſdome he hath been pleas'd to contrive for Mans Inſtruction with a Gracious, though often

Luk 1. 48. *Joan* 2. 3, 4.

Miſ-

Miſ-underſtood Conſtancy he perſiſts in. He knows that many, who are diſpos'd to Cavil at the preſent Contrivance or Stile of Scripture, would be apt to take Exceptions at any other: for ſome thing or other it muſt neceſſarily be; and the unimaginable Diverſity of Humours, Judgements, and Prepoſſeſſions is ſuch, that as Theſe now ſay, why Thus, and not So, others would in caſe of alteration be as ready to ask, Why ſo, and not Thus. 'Tis queſtionable, whether the Iſraelites were greater Murmurers at *Pharaoh* in *Egypt*, or at *Moſes* in the Deſert: and the Children complain'd of by their Companions in the Market-place, have had either Poſterity or Predeceſſors in all Ages; which have ſtill been of the Diſpoſition of thoſe Jews, who imputed the More than Prophets Rigidneſs of Virtue, to the great Enemy of that lovely Quality; and the Greater than *Solomon*'s Condeſcentions to the Vices he deſign'd them to deſtroy. But the Great Phyſician of Mankind is too Compaſſionate and Wiſe, to let his diſtracted Patients preſcribe their own Courſe of Phyſick; Or, to decline our fond and peeviſh Cavils, ſhuffle or diſcompoſe

Mat. 11. 16, 17, 18, 19.

compoſe thoſe Myſterious and Profound Contrivances, whoſe Wiſdome engages the Attention, and exacts the Wonders of thoſe Heavenly unclog'd Spirits, that are ſcarce more advantag'd over us by their Native Abilities, than by the means they have of improving them. And therefore, our Saviour refus'd to Deſcend from the Croſs, though they whoſe Malice ſerv'd to fix him there, (the Chief Prieſts and Scribes themſelves,) declar'd that on thoſe Terms they would believe on him. And though, we are (but too) apt to fancy, that we ſhould be wonn to our Duty, if it were taught or preſs'd in ſuch or ſuch a way, yet we may be pleas'd to remember, that 'twas one in Hell, that would needs have another means than the Scripture, of having Sinners Preach'd to; and one in Heaven, that, referring them to the Scripture, declar'd; *That if men heard not Moſes and the Prophets, neither would they be perſwaded, though one roſe from the Dead to preach to them.*

1 *Pet.* 1. 12.

Mat. 27. 42.

Luk 16. 31.

If I addreſt what I write, not to ſo Intelligent a Perſon as *Theophilus*, but to Promiſcuous Readers, I ſhould add to what I have ſaid of the ſeveral Exceptions

ceptions againſt the Scripture, a Cordial Advice to all, whoſe Parts and Leiſure give them not a juſt Hope of being able ſolidly to vindicate it either to themſelves or others, to Decline as much as diſcreedy they can, the Liſtning to Objectors or Objections, of what ſort, or under what Diſguiſe ſoever, againſt that Heavenly Book; eſpecially, if propos'd by plauſible and inſinuating Wits. For it not being Neceſſary, (nor indeed Poſſible) for every Private Chriſtian, to know the Opinions and Reaſons of all Diſſenters about the Scripture, (no more than for every Traveller to be a Geographer;) nor requiſite to the Knowledge of the Way to Heav'n, to know all thoſe, in which they that miſs it, Wander; (as to learn the way from *Dover* to *London*, I need not learn thoſe that lead not thither:) it is not Prudent to run a very probable Hazard of Diſquieting one's Faith, and a not improbable one of Subverting it, only to gratifie a needleſs Curioſity; an Itch, which we are delighted to have ſcratc'd, but which is exaſperated by being ſo. And frequently, though your Deſign ſeem Innocent, (as only

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to Hear without Believing, and pleaſe your ſelf with ſomething of Wit and Novelty;) yet theſe Converſations rarely enough prove Harmleſs; and (as too frequent and ſad Experience proclaims) generally either abate a Degree of your Faith, or Qualifie ſome Ardor of your Love, or Leſſen your Reverence for that Matchleſs Book, or put ſome ſtrange and diſquieting Scruples into your Thoughts, which 'tis much eaſier to Confute than to Silence. Wherefore, as in Infectious Times, when the Plague reigns, Phyſicians uſe more ſtrictly to forbid the ſmaller Exceſſes and Inordinacies of Dyet, and the uſe of Meats of ill Digeſtion, or apt to breed any Diſtemper; becauſe every petty Feaver, becomes through the Malignity of the Air, apt to turn into the Plague: ſo now, that Antiſcripturiſm grows ſo riſe, and ſpreads ſo faſt, I hope 'twill not appear Unſeaſonable to adviſe thoſe, that tender the Safety and Serenity of their Faith, to be more than ordinarily ſhy of being too Venturous of any Books, or Company, that may derogate from their Veneration of the Scripture; becauſe by the Predominant

nant and Contagious Profaneneſs of the Times, the leaſt injurious Opinions Harbor'd of it, are prone to degenerate into irreligion. But I fear, you'l think I Preach.

The eighth and laſt Objection.

And now, *Theophilus*, I am arriv'd at that part of this Diſcourſe, wherein it will be fit to Examine that Grand Objection againſt the ſtyle of the Scripture, which, though a Philoſopher would not look upon it as the moſt Conſiderable, is yet moſt urg'd by many of its Witty Adverſaries; eſpecially ſuch as are wont to Exerciſe and Gratifie their Phanſie more than their Reaſon. The Objection it ſelf is this, *That the Scripture is ſo unadorn'd with Flowers of Rhetorick, and ſo deſtitute of Eloquence, that it is flat, and proves commonly inefficatious upon Intelligent Readers. Inſomuch, that divers great Wits and great Perſons, eſpecially States-men, do either Deſpiſe it, or neglect to ſtudy it*; And truly, the Story is famous of that Cardinal, (who flouriſh'd in the laſt Age) that ſaid, That once indeed he had read the Bible, but if he were

to

to do so again, 'twould lose him all his Latinity. And amongst those great Orators, (as they thought themselves) who liv'd in the same Age and Country that he did, the Complaint was ordinary, That the Reading of the Bible untaught them the Purity of the Loman Language, and corrupted their Ciceronian Style. And I remember no obscure Prince, (though he shall here be nameless, because for other Qualities I honour him) in no obscure Company, disputed with me one day, an Opinion about the Style of the Scripture, to which the Cardinals Scorn was a Complement. I wish these sawcy Expressions were but Outlandish, and could not cross those Seas that inviron *England*; (which is not so happily sever'd from the Worlds Vices, as from its Continent,) This profane judging so boldly that Book, Men shall be judg'd by, being, if not a Native, yet at least a free Denizon of *England*; For not only 'twas one, that I am sorry I can call our Countrey-man, who is recorded to have solemnly prefer'd one of the Odes of *Pindarus*, before all the *Psalms* of *David*; but I could easily add divers resembling Instances,

Inſtances, that I have my ſelf been troubl'd to meet with, were it not that I ſomewhat doubt whether this kind of prophane Sayings be not as well Fitter as Worthier to be Forgotten than Remember'd, and to be Suppreſs'd than Divulg'd; For (not to mention that the recording of ſuch Enormities puts an ill Complement upon Mankind) the Satisfaction ſome Men's Curioſities receive by ſuch Relations, will ſcarce account for the Temptation it gives others, to imitate what they find ſome have dar'd. For there are ſome Sins whoſe grand Determent is a kind of Perſwaſion, that they are too Horrid to have been committed: and ſome Wiſe Legiſlators thought it better againſt certain Crimes, to uſe the Silence of the Laws, than their Threats. I ſhall therefore, without any further Mention of ſcandalous Particularities, take it for granted, that there have been, and are but too many Witty Diſreſpecters of the Scripture. But as for the Accuſation it ſelf, which they are alledg'd to countenance, many Defences might be here made againſt it, if divers Conſiderations pertinent to that purpoſe among others,

others, did not belong to ſome of thoſe enſuing Parts of my Diſcourſe, wherein 'tis not the Style of the Scripture, but other Themes that are principally and Directly treated of. Yet that You may be aſſiſted to referr hither ſuch Parts of the following Diſcourſe, as are Applicable to the matter under Conſideration, I ſhall here take Notice to You, that my Anſwers to the Objection above propos'd, may for the moſt part be reduc'd to theſe five heads of Argument.

First, That as to divers parts of the Scripture, it was not requiſite that they ſhould be Adorn'd with Rhetorical Embelliſhments.

Next, That the Bible ſeems to have much leſs Eloquence than indeed it has, to thoſe that Read it only in Tranſlations, eſpecially the vulgar Latine Verſion.

Thirdly, That by reaſon of the differing Notions, ſeveral ſorts of Men, eſpecially of diſtant Nations and Climates, have of Eloquence, many Paſſages that are thought Uneloquent by Us, may appear Excellently expreſs'd to another part of Mankind.

Fourthly, That there are in the Scripture

Scripture a multitude of those Texts, wherein the Author thought fit to employ the Ornaments of Language, conspicuously adorn'd with such as agree ev'n with our Notions of Eloquence.

And Lastly, that it is very farr from being consonant to Experience, that the Style of the Scripture does make it Unoperative upon the Generality of its Readers, if they be not Faultily Indispos'd to receive Impressions from it.

As to the first of these, having Already above declar'd, that there are many parts of Scripture, wherein it would have been Improper to affect Eloquence; I am willing to suppose, that You have not yet forgot what has been formerly said. And therefore, I am unwilling to detain You on this first consideration. Yet I cannot but on this Occasion take Notice to You, that we allow all sorts of people Expressions proper and fitted to their several Professions and Themes. How many of us can dwell on Lawyers, Physicians, and Chymists Books, though oftentimes written in Terms as harsh and as uncourtly; as if those

Rudeneſſes were their Deſign? and yet we can Neglect and ſcorn the Scripture becauſe in ſome Paſſages we there find the Myſteries and other Matters of Religion, deliver'd in a Proper and Theological ſtyle. I remember *Machiavel*, in the Dedication of his famous Prince, after he had (not *cauſelesly*) acknowledg'd to *Lorenzo de Medici*, (to whom his Book is addreſſ'd) that he had not ſtuff'd it with lofty Language, or big Words, nor Adorn'd it with any of thoſe enveagling outward Ornaments, uſual to other Authors in their Writings; gives this account of the Plainneſs of his ſtyle, [*Perche io ho voluto, o chè veruna coſa la honori* (la mia opera) *o che ſolamente la veritâ della materia, & la gravitâ del ſoggetto la faccia grata*] that *he thought fit either that nothing at all ſhould recommend his Work, or that the only truth of the Diſcourſe and the Dignity of the ſubject ſhould make it acceptable*, and exact its welcome. If a meer Statesman, writing to a Prince, upon a meer civil Theme, could reaſonably talk thus: with how much more Reaſon may God expect a welcoming Entertainment for the leaſt Adorn'd parts of a

Book,

Book, of which the Truth is a direct Emanation from the Eſſential and Supreme Truth, and of which the Contents concern no leſs than mans Eternal Happineſs or Miſery? And if our nice Italian Criticks themſelves, cannot by the Plainneſs of *Macchiavel's* ſtyle, nor the forbidding of his Writings by the Inquiſition, be deterr'd from as Aſſiduous as Prohibited a Study of his Books; what Excuſe will they one day have, that now make the Unaffected Style of Scripture the ſole Excuſe of their Deſpiſing, (or at leaſt neglecting) that Divine Book?

The ſecond Anſwer to the eighth Objection.

Secondly, As to the Diſadvantage the Scripture receives by its not being read by thoſe I now reaſon with, in its Originals; though I have ſaid ſomething to it already, yet I muſt now reſume it into Conſideration, and repreſent, That 'tis no wonder they reverence not the Bible's Style, as they Ought, whilſt they judge of that of an Hebrew Book by their Vulgar Tranſlation; which (though ſometimes cauſeleſly enough cenſur'd by divers Proteſtant Divines, that would find it no eaſie Task to make a better, yet) certainly is in many Places ſtrangely

Harſh and Barbarous; and by a Partial and unlucky affectation of Literality, miſſeth the Propriety both of the Hebrew Speech, and of the Latine: and to adhere to the Originals Words commonly injures its Eloquence, and oftentimes its Senſe; rendring excellent Expreſſions in ſuch Ungracefull ones, as would probably fright Readers from it, if it could not very well ſpare Fine Language: ſo that to our preſent Theme, we may not ill apply that Notable ſaying of *Mirandula*; *Hebræi bibunt fontes, Græci rivos, Latini paludes.* The Old French Riming Tranſlation of *Virgil*, makes not the *Æneids* much more Eloquent than *Hopkins* and *Sternhold* have made the *Pſalms*: which ſure being Written by a Perſon who (ſetting aſide his Inſpiration) was both a Traveller, a Courtier, and a Poet, muſt at leaſt be allow'd to contain poliſh'd and faſhionable Expreſſions in their own Language, how courſely ſoever they have been miſ-rendred in Ours. What Opinion the Eaſtern World hath of the ſweet ſinger of *Iſrael*, may appear, both by other Hyperbolical Fictions they believe of him, (whom with *Moſes*, *Jeſus*,

Jesus and *Mahomet*, they Reckon amongst the Four Great Prophets) and by what *Kessæus*, (the fam'd Mahometan Writer of the Lives of the Fathers) relates concerning him, *That when* David *sang the Praises of God, the Hills, and Birds, and Beasts therein accompany'd him.* Which gross Literal interpretation of Figurative Expressions in the *Psalms*, and of his pathetical invitations to the inanimate Creatures to joyn with him in celebrating their common Creator, he seems to have borrow'd from the Alcoran it self; where *Mahomet* brings God in saying, 'We reduc'd the 'Mountains to comply with him, who 'should joyn with him in Praises Morn-'ing and Evening; the Birds also stock 'to him; all these are obsequious to 'him. And though the New Testament be not written in Hebrew, yet its Writers being Hebrews, have chiefly conform'd themselves to the Style of the Translators of the Old Testament, (which whether or no it constitute what Criticks of late so dispute of under the Name of *Lingua*, or *Dialectus Hellenistica*, I pretend not to define) and that of the Apocry-

Kessæus, pag 99. See *Psal.* 114.4. *Psal.* 19.

Surat 37. *Vide H. Hotting* p. 62, and 63.

phal Authors and other Jews Writing in the ſame Language; who (except perhaps *Joſephus* and *Philo*) wrote rather, If I may ſo ſpeak, an Hebrew than an Attick Greek; or at leaſt, in a Dialect, which (by reaſon of their frequent References to the Septuagints Verſion,) abounds, if not with *Hebraiſms*, with expreſſions Obvious in Hebrew Writings, and Unfrequent in Greek ones, and ſo reliſhes much of the *Hebraick* Style; Of which, as well in the New as the Old Teſtament, thoſe we reaſon with, being ſtrangers to that Primitive Tongue, muſt be incompetent Judges; there being in the Idiotiſms of all Languages, peculiar Graces, which (like thoſe moſt ſubtil Spirits, which Exhale in powring Eſſences out of one Veſſel into another) are loſt in moſt (eſpecially if Literal) Tranſlations; and the Holy Tongue being that which God himſelf made choice of, to Dignifie with his Expreſſions, having divers whoſe Penetrancy is as little transfuſible into any other, as the Sun's dazeling Brightneſs, or the Water of a Diamond can be undetractingly Painted; and having divers Words and Phraſes, whoſe Pithy-

neſs

neſs and Copiouſneſs, none in Deriv'd (or other) Languages can match. Some of the Hebrew Conjugations, as chiefly thoſe call'd *Hiphil* and *Hitpaël*, give ſignifications to Verbs, which the Want of anſwerable Conjugations in Weſtern Languages, makes us unable to fill or Equal without Paraphraſes, which are very rarely ſo comprehenſive as the Original Words; and (to hint this upon the by) the Ignorance, or not Conſidering of this one Grammatical Truth, hath kept Men from fully Underſtanding, divers Paſſages of the New Teſtament, wherein the Greek Tongues want of thoſe Conjugations, hath made Active or Intranſitive Verbs, be us'd in a Tranſitive or Reciprocal ſignification. How impertinently Men's Ignorance of its Originals, may make them cenſure the Scripture, I had once occaſion to take notice of, by finding a famous Commentator, note Saint *Paul* of impropriety of Speech; in the beginning of that, which is commonly thought to be his Firſt Epiſtle to the *Theſſalonians*, but by the Learned *Grotius* (in his Paradoxes, *De Antichriſto*,) not improbably eſteemed to be his Se-

cond: for whereas instead of the Greek Words ἀφ' ὑμῶν ἐξήχηται ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου, which ours have rightly Englished, *from You sounded out the Word*; he found in his Translation, *A vobis diffamatus est sermo*; not knowing *Paul* to have Written in Greek, he would needs correct him for having Written *Diffamatus est*, instead of *Divulgatus est*.

2 Thes. 1. 8.

The Third Answer.

Thirdly, We may yet further consider, That as to many Passages of Scripture accus'd of not appearing Eloquent to *European* Judges, it might be justly represented, That the Eastern Eloquence differs widely from the Western. In those purer Climates, where Learning, that is here but a Denizon, was a Native; the most cherish'd and admir'd Compositures of their Wits, if judg'd by Western Rules of Oratory, will be judg'd Destitute of it. Their Dark and Involv'd Sentences, their Figurative and Parabolical Discourses; their Abrupt and Maim'd way of expressing themselves, which often leaves much place to Guesses at the Sense; and their neglect of connecting Transitions, which often leaves us at a loss for the Method

thod and Coherency of what they Write; are Qualities, that our Rhetoricians do not more generally Diſlike, than theirs Practice: their being, perhaps little leſs Diſparity in our Opinions than in our Wayes of Writing; for their Pens, (as if it were a Preſage of the different Changes the Jews and Greeks have made in point of Religion) move from the Right hand towards the Left; our's (therein imitated by thoſe of the *Ethiopians*) from the Left towards the Right; ſo that we think they write Backwards, and they, that we do ſo. Of this difference of the Notions, that the Eaſtern and Weſtern Colonies of the Sons of *Adam* have harbour'd concerning Eloquence, I ſhall need to Mention but one inſtance, that One is ſo remarkable: and that's the Alkoran. How much the *Mahometan* World boaſts the Eloquence of that Book, can ſcarce be unknown to thoſe that have, (though but a little) buſi'd their Curioſity in that ſort of Enquiries. The Ableſt Arabian Expoſitors, and other Authors, tell us, that all the Wit and Art of Men and Dæmons, would be unable to hinder that Book from being

Feidavi, Ahmedibn, Edris, and others.

S. *Surat.* x. S. 11. and S. 17. being Matchleſs; *Mahomet* himſelf was ſo proud of it, that in ſome paſſages in it, he defy's its Oppoſers to equal one Surat or Section of it, and ſeems to make its Peerleſneſs an Argument of it's not being of barely Human Authority: and the *Saracens* preſs'd with their Religions being deſtitute of atteſting Miracles, will not ſcruple to reply, That though there were no other Miracle to manifeſt the Excellency of their Religion above that taught by the Prophets, yet the Alcoran it Self were ſufficient, as being a Laſting Miracle that tranſcends all other Miracles. How Charming its Eloquence may be in its Original, I confeſs my ſelf too unskilfull in the Arabick Tongue, to be a competent Judge; my other Studies and Diſtractions having made me forget moſt of the little Knowledg, I had once acquir'd of that flouriſhing Language. But though the *Alkoran* have ſtolen too much from the Bible, not to contain

--- Etſi nihil præter ſolum Alkoranum (adduxiſſet,) ſatis hoc foret ad eximiam excellentiam ſupra reliqua, quæ Prophetæ adduxerunt: nam ille Miraculum eſt, quod in ſecula durat præ omnibus aliis Miraculis. H. Hotting. Hiſt. Orient. pagina circiter 300.

tain divers Excellent Things; (which is one Inducement to me to cite it the oftner) yet certainly, not only the Antient Latin Verſion of it, made by orders of the Abbot *Petrus Cluniacenſis*, and publiſh'd in the Laſt Age, by the Procurement of *Bibliander*, (and of which this is the Grand Critick *Scaliger*'s Exclamation, *Deum immortalem, quam inepta eſt Vulgaris illa, quam habemus, Interpretatio?*) would ſcarce by our *European* Orators be thought ſo much as of kinn to Eloquent; but the Recent Tranſlations I have ſeen of it in French, and (as to divers of it, in) Latin, elaborated by great Scholars, and accurate Arabicians, by making it very Conformable to its Eaſtern Original, have not ſo rendred it, but that Perſons that judge of Rhetorick by the Rules of it current in theſe Weſtern Parts of the World, would inſtead of extolling it for the Superlative, not allow it the Poſitive Degree of Eloquence; would think the Style as deſtitute of Graces, as the Theology of Truth; and would poſſibly as much Admire the *Saracen*'s Admiration, as they do the Book. And not only what I have ſeen of the Eminent

J. Scaliger Epiſt. 362. apud Theod. Hackſpan in libro cui Titulus, Fides & Leges Mohamædis. pag. 2.

Eminent East-Indians, is strangely incongruous to our Notions of Eloquence; but what I have perus'd of the Famous *Literati* (as they call the Learned Men) of *China*, though written with Great Care by the Authors, and (as it seems) Translated with no Less by the Knowing Interpreters, would, to an ordinary *European* Orator, appear rather Ridiculous than Eloquent. But to content our selves with the Examples we formerly selected out of the less Remote Parts of the East; Since *Mahomet*, whose Eloquence (almost as Prosperous as his Sword) was able to bring Credit and Proselytes even to such a Religion as His: since *Moses*, that so Celebrated Legislator, bred up in the Refining Court, and all the fam'd Wisdome of the Egyptians: since *Solomon*, who had such Incommunicable Advantages to improve himself, and whose Wisdome (esteem'd capable to have Govern'd more Kingdoms than his had Subjects) the Western World hath for so many Ages Admir'd, and the Eastern, only not Idoliz'd: and since the Prophet *Daniel*, whose Promising Youth was not only Cultivated by the

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Inſtructions of the Chaldean Sages, but Enjoy'd the Diviner Tutorage of Gods Spirit; and whoſe Matchleſs Abilities preferr'd him from a Captive, to be the Chief as well of the Caldean Wiſe-men, as the Median Princes: ſince theſe Applauded Writers, I ſay, whom the Eaſtern Nations ſo Much and ſo Juſtly admir'd, by many of our Latiniſts are not thought Good Writers, becauſe of our Differing Notions of Eloquence; nay, if amongſt *Europeans* themſelves, *Cicero* hath found Many Cenſurers, and a Book hath been publiſhed to prove that *Tully* was not Eloquent; may not we Rationally enough ſuppoſe, that the Grecian and Roman Style amongſt the Eaſtern Writers, may not be much better reliſh'd than their's is amongſt us; and that conſequently, in thoſe parts of the Scripture whoſe Eloquence is not Obvious to us *Europeans*, the Pretended Want of Eloquence may be but a Differing and Eaſtern kind of it? Specially, if we conſider, that the Antienteſt Writers in Proſe now extant amongſt us, were ſcarce contemporary to the lateſt Writers of the Old Teſtament; and yet that Eloquence, the Dreſs

Dreſs of our Thoughts, like the Dreſs of our Bodies, differs not only in ſeveral Regions, but in ſeveral Ages. And oftentimes in That, as in Attire, what was Lately Faſhionable, is Now Ridiculous, and what Now makes a Man look like a Courtier, may within theſe Few Luſtres make him look like an Antick: though how purely 'tis the Mode that makes ſuch things appear Handſome or Deform'd, may be readily collected from the Viciſſitudes obſervable in Modes; Men by intervalls relapſing into Obſolete Faſhions. That there are Great Changes in that Mode of Writing men commonly miſtake for Eloquence, I ſhall produce no leſs Illuſtrious a Witneſs than *Seneca*, who in his hundred and fourteenth Epiſtle, (to omit other Paſſages in his VVorks) not only proves it at large, but ſhows that in ſome Ages, even the Faulty wayes of Expreſſion, conſpir'd in by the VVits of thoſe Times, have paſs'd for Eloquence. The Scripture Style then, though it were not Eloquent Now, may have excellently ſuited the Genious of Thoſe Times its Several Books were written in; and have been very proper for thoſe People it was Primarily

Primarily design'd to Work upon. And if I would presume to be Paradoxical in a thing I so little pretend Skill in as Eloquence, I might further represent on this occasion, That Rhetorick being but an Organical or Instrumental Art, in order Chiefly to Perswasion, or Delight, its Rules ought to be estimated by their Tendency, and Commensurateness to its End; and consequently, are to be conform'd to by a Wiseman, but so farr forth as he judgeth them Seasonable and Proper to Please or to Perswade: which when he sees he can do better by Declining them, than by Practising them, (as Orators, like Hunters, must oftentimes leave the most Beaten Paths, if they will not lose their Game) he should not scruple to preferr the End to the Means; the Scope of the Artist, to what the Schools are pleas'd to call the Scope of the Art; and to think it more Eligible to speak Powerfully, than to speak Regularly. And we may hence consider, that it may be somewhat Inconsiderate to judge of all Eloquence, by the Rules of it that *Cicero*'s Admirers impose on us; and Confound their Systems of Precepts with the Art of Rhetorick,

A short Digression concerning the Art of Rhetorick.

Rhetorick, as if they were Equivalent, or of the ſame extent. For *Cicero* being reputed (and that Deſervedly) an Eloquent man, and very ſucceſsful in Perſwading his thus and thus qualify'd Hearers; divers, whoſe Modeſty or Deſpair kept them from aſpiring to more than Imitation, obſerving that *Tully* often made uſe of ſuch and ſuch a Contrivance, and ſuch and ſuch Figurative forms of ſpeaking, took the pains to reduce thoſe Obſervations into Rules, which being highly applauded by their Succeſſors, and by them recruited with ſome Reſembling Rules drawn from the Practice of a few other Orators, were afterwards compil'd into an Art, which as I deny not to be a great Help to the imitation of *Tully* and *Demoſthenes*, or thoſe others from whoſe Structure and Faſhions of ſpeech ſuch Inſtitutions have been drawn, ſo I ſhall no more take it for a Compleat Syſtem of Rhetorick, than any Inſtructions deducible from the Journals of *Solomons* Tarſhiſh Fleets, and from the Grecian and Romans Sea-voyages, for the true and entire Art of Navigation. For if other Perſons, either by an Endowment or Improve-

Improvement of Nature, can find other Equally, or more Happy and Powerful or Moving (though never so differing) wayes of expressing themselves, they ought as little to be Confin'd by the Prescriptions acquiesc'd in before them, as *Columbus* thought himself Oblig'd to be by the Rules or Practice of Antient Navigators; whose Methods and Voyages, had he not boldly ventur'd to Vary from, and pass beyond, how Vast and Rich a Portion of the World had his Conformity left undiscover'd! And on this occasion, *Theophilus*, I must mention one thing that I have observ'd, which perhaps you will not think either Despicable or Impertinent: and it is, That though the People of *China* be esteem'd the most Numerous, the most Flourishing, and (very few, if any, excepted) the most Civiliz'd Nation in the World: though amongst them the greatest part of Preferments be attainable by Verbal Learning, and though they have Books in their Language (how Well written, I know not, having never Read any of them) of almost all kind of Liberal Arts and Sciences; yet I find by the late Tra-

veller in *China*, that Writ the Italian Hiſtory of that Kingdome, and by other Authors that mention their Literature, that this Populous and Ingenious Nation, that has been ſo long ſetled in a Flouriſhing Condition, and more than any other People allows Encouragements and Recompences to Learned Men, has not car'd to receive Rhetorick into the Number of their Arts and Sciences, preſuming, as one may gueſs, that the Confining men's Expreſſions to Eſtabliſh'd Rules would not be ſo like to Enable thoſe to expreſs themſelves Eloquently, that Nature has Indiſpos'd to do ſo, as to Hinder others from expreſſing themſelves, as well, as, were they left to their full liberty, they would do. I will not ſay, nevertheleſs, that our ſtrict Ciceronian Rules, are Crutches that may be Helps to Weak or Lame Phanſies, but are Cloggs or Burdens to Sound and Active ones: but this I obſerve, that theſe Utopian Laws of Oratory, are ſeldome rigorouſly impos'd by any, that publiſh other Books that may be examined by them: and that Wiſemen, as well in the Weſt, as in the Eaſt, will not eaſily loſe Good

Thoughts,

Thoughts, or Good Expreſſions, becauſe they are not Reducible to Them. And this I the rather preſs, becauſe I have found but too many ſo blindly Servile, as to Imitate without Diſcretion or Reſerve in applauded Authors, as well the Bad as the Good; create ſuch Artiſts Errors, Rules of Art; and make one man's Particular Phanſies, or perhaps Failings, Confining Laws to others, and convey them as ſuch to their Succeeders, who are afterwards bold to miſ-name all Unobſequiouſneſs to their Incogitancy, Preſumption; as *Seneca* tells us of divers Imperfections of ſtyle, which being familiar to ſome One, who at that time hath the Vogue for Eloquence, are upon his Score, copy'd by his Imitators, and by them Taught to others: As, (ſayes he) when *Salluſt* flouriſhed, his Style made Maimed and Abrupt Sentences, words Surprizingly Miſ-plac'd, and an Obſcure Brevity paſs for Ornaments: and indeed, 'tis not uneaſie for any man to

——*Hæc vitia unus aliquis inducit, ſub quo tunc eloquentia eſt: cæteri imitantur, & alter alteri tradunt. Sic Salluſtio vigente, amputatæ ſententiæ, & verba ante exſpectatum cadentia, & obſcura Brevitas, fuere pro cultu, Seneca Epiſt* 114.

obſerve, the very Weeds of Cry'd up Rhetoricians, cry'd up for Flowers of Rhetorick. But having already wandred, perhaps, too farr in this Digreſſion, I ſhall now conclude it; though, ſince, tis for the Scripture, and with its Enemies that I am contending, I ſhall venture to do it, with minding our Cardinal, and thoſe that ſo Undervalue the Scripture's wayes of Expreſſion, in Compariſon of *Tully*'s, becauſe his Books do ſo Regularly Expreſs the Rules of Eloquence; that 'tis no Marvel they ſhould find *Cicero*'s Writings to be ſo Conformable to their Lawes of Art, whilſt they frame thoſe Laws of Art out of his Writings.

But, *Theophilus*, I fear I have detain'd You too long in a Digreſſion whereinto I ſlipt but Occaſionally, which is not ſo Neceſſary to my preſent Argument, but that I am content You ſhould look upon the Paradox as any thing rather than an Opinion or Reaſoning whereon I lay any Great ſtreſs.

The fourth Anſwer to the eighth Objection.

In the fourth Place then let me repreſent to You, That there are very Few, if any Books in the World, that

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are no more Voluminous, in which there is greater Plenty of Figurative Expreſſions, than in the Bible. Though this may ſeem Strange, 'tis no more than may be made Good by more than ſome Hundreds of Inſtances; there being few Tropes or Figures in Rhetorick, of which Numerous Examples are not collectible out of the Expreſſions of Holy Writ. I inſiſt not upon this, becauſe a bare Catalogue of the Rhetorical Paſſages I could enumerate, would too much ſwell an Eſſay; and I am inform'd, that Task hath been already proſperouſly undertaken by Abler Pens. Wherefore, I ſhall now only ſay, that the Eloquence of the Scripture hath been highly Celebrated by no ſmall Number of Perſons, highly celebrated for Eloquence; and that many, who thought themſelves as Intelligent in Oratory, as thoſe that Cenſure the Scripture, have ſuſpected their own Eloquence of Inſufficiency, worthily to Extol that of the Prophet *Eſay*; and ſome of them, (amongſt whom I cannot but Name that Excellent Prince of *Mirandula*, whom even the greateſt Rabbi of this Age, ſtyles the Phœnix *Menaſſe ben Iſrael.*

of His Age) who after having Unsatisfiedly Travell'd thorough all sorts of Human Volumes, have Rested and acquiesc'd only in these Divine Ones: which will not a little Recommend the Scripture, since we may apply to Books, what an Excellent Poet sayes of Mistresses,

Mr. *Waller*

'Tis not that which First we love,
But what Dying we approve,

That we Express the highest value of. And indeed, the best Artists making Two Parts of Oratory; The One which consists in the Embellishments of our Conceptions, and the Other that consists in the Congruity of them to our Design and Method, and the suitable Accommodation of them to the various Circumstances considerable in the Matter, the Speaker, and the Hearers; this Latter is peculiarly and Inimitably practis'd in the Scripture; and as much of the Former (which is not onely less considerable, but is changeable and unagreed of, as we have Newly seen) is made use of, as is requisite to the Author's purposes, and to manifest that Delicacy or Smooth-

Smoothneſs, never ceaſes to be the Property of his Style, but becauſe in ſome Caſes it would be Incongruous to his Deſign. And where theſe Verbal Ornaments are Spar'd, they are not Miſs'd; for as there are ſome Bodies ſo Well ſhap'd and faſhion'd, that any Cloaths become them much better than the moſt fine and gracefull would do Ordinary (much more Crooked or Miſhapen) Perſons: ſo there are Writings, whoſe Matter and Structure are ſuch, that the Plaineſt Language can ſcarce Miſ-become them ſo, as to hinder them from Eclipſing a Trifling or Ill-match'd Subject, with the Spruceſt and Gaudieſt Expreſsions that can be laviſh'd on it. But the Truth is, that this Florid Eloquence is Great in many Texts, where 'tis not at all Conſpicuous, being Hidden in the Matter; (as in Roſes of Diamonds, the Jewels oftentimes keep us from minding the Flower and the Enamel) and appears not Great, but becauſe 'tis not the Greateſt. Some famous Writers have Challeng'd *Demoſthenes* and *Cicero*, to compare with the Prophet *Eſay*; in whom they have not only Admir'd that Lofty Strain which Artiſts

have term'd the Sublime Character, but even that Harmonious Diſpoſition and Sound of Words, (I mean in their Original) which the French prettily call, *La cadence des Periodes.*

Wherefore, *Theophilus*, whereas I have formerly acknowledg'd, that there are ſome Witty Men that ſpeak very Diſreſpectfully of the Scripture, I hope that if You meet with any ſuch, You will conſider, That it has among the Wits, as well Celebrators, and Admirers, as Diſregarders. And that You may think this Deſire of mine the more Reaſonable, be pleas'd to conſider with me, That there are divers things which ought to Leſſen the Authority of the Diſparagers of the Scripture, in the caſe under Conſideration.

For firſt, how Few of them think You, are wont to Read it in its Originals, and how much Leſs a Number is there of thoſe who both Know and duly conſider all thoſe Particulars repreſented in the paſt Diſcourſe on the behalf of the Scripture's Style? So that in a Great many Men of Parts, their Undervaluation of the Scripture proceeds not from their having Great

Wits,

Wits, but from their not having a Competent Information of what can be alledg'd for its Juſtification.

But though we ſhould ſuppoſe thoſe we ſpeak of not to want Information, yet we may well ſuppoſe many of them not to be free from Vanity and Envy, there ſcarce being any fault ſo incident to great Wits, as the Ambition of being thought ſtill more and more ſo, and the Unwillingneſs that any Compoſures but their Own, or thoſe they have a Hand in, ſhould be Celebrated: as if all Praiſes were Injurious to them, that are given to any other. It need be no great wonder then if ſo excellent a Book as the Scripture, have as well Enviers, as Admirers: And if there be divers who Cavil at it, and ſeem to Undervalue it, out of a Criminal fondneſs of the over-ambition'd Title of a *Wit*, which they hope to acquire by Unherding and Keeping out of the Road, and Owning their being able to Slight and Diſgrace that, which ſo many others Reverence and Venerate.

But thirdly, It is ſufficiently Notorious, that of the Oppoſers of the Scripture, there is, a great part whoſe Vanity

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Vanity and Envy, though no ſmall Faults, are not their greateſt Crimes; but who live ſo Diſſolutely and Scandalouſly, that the Suſpition cannot but be obvious, that ſuch decry the Scripture for fear of being Oblig'd (at leaſt, for meer ſhame) to live more conformably to it. And that 'twere no ſlander to affirm it to be their Intereſt, not their Reaſon, that makes them find fault with a Book that finds ſo much fault with them; And they who are ſenſible of the Truth of that of our Saviour, where he ſayes, *That many love Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are Evill: and that He that doth Evill, hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, leſt his Deeds ſhould be reprov'd*, will not be much mov'd to find Conſcious Malefactors find fault with the Statute-Book; but will rather look upon theſe Sinners Cenſures of the Scripture, as Apologies they judge neceſſary to Palliate their Sins, or as Acts of Revenge, for their being expos'd in all their Deformity to the Eyes of the World, and of their own Conſciences, in the Bible: and (conſequently) will be inclin'd to Think, that their Irreligious Expreſsions do rather

John 3. 19, 20.

rather ſhew what they would have Men Believe of Them, than what they Believe of the Scripture, by ſeeming to Slight which, they hope to have their Vices imputed rather to a Superiority of their Reaſon over that of others, than a Servitude of their Reaſon to their Paſsions.

A long Digreſſion againſt Prophaneneſs, as it relates to the Scripture: Pſal. 39. 3.

"Here I thought to paſs on to another Argument, But (to Expreſs my 'ſelf in *Davids* Words) *While I was 'Muſing, the fire burn'd*, and my Zeal 'for the Scripture, together with 'the Charity it has taught me to 'Exerciſe ev'n towards its Oppoſers, 'ſuffers me not, with either Silence or 'Lanquid Reſentments, to ſee how 'much that Incomparable Book loſes 'of the Opinion of Leſs diſcerning 'Men, upon the Account of their 'Diſ-reſpects, who are (whether 'Deſervedly or not,) look'd upon as 'Wits. And therefore to what I have 'Repreſented to Invalidate the Au'thority of thoſe Few Perſons, other'wiſe Truly Witty, that Undervalue 'the Scripture, I am oblig'd to add, 'that beſides Them, there is a Number 'of thoſe that ſlight the Scripture; 'who are but Look'd upon as Wits,

'without

'without being such Indeed: Nay, 'who many of them would not be so 'much as Mistaken for such, but for 'the Boldness they take to Own 'Slighting of the Scripture, and to A-'buse the Words of it, to Irreligious 'Senses, and perhaps passing to the 'Impudence of Perverting Inspir'd 'Expressions, to deliver Obscene 'Thoughts. But to Knowing and Se-'rious Men, this Prævaricating with 'the Scripture will neither Discredit 'It, nor much Recommend the Pro-'phane Prævaricator; For a Books 'being Capable of being so Mis-us'd, 'is too Unavoidable to be a Dispa-'ragement to it. Nor will any Intel-'ligent Reader Undervalue the char-'ming Poems of *Virgil* or of *Ovid*, 'because by Shuffling and Disguising 'the Expressions, some French Wri-'ters have of Late been pleas'd out 'of Rare Pieces to Compose whole 'Books of what they call, *Vers Bur-'lesques*, Design'd by their Ridicu-'lousness to make their Readers Sport; 'And on the Other side, to Abuse 'Dismember'd Words and Passages 'of any Author to Meanings he ne're 'Dream'd of, is a Thing so Easie, that

'almost

'almoſt any Man may have the Wit
'to Talk at that Prophane Rate, that
'will but allow himſelf the Sawci-
'neſs to do ſo. And indeed Experi-
'ence ſhows, that if this Vice it ſelf
'do not make its Practiſers ſuſpected
'of the being Neceſsitous of the Qua-
'lity they put it on to be thought Ma-
'ſters of, yet at leaſt Perſons Intelli-
'gent, and Pious, will not be apt to
'Value any Diſcourſe as truly Wit-
'ty, that cannot Pleaſe the Fancy with-
'out Offending the Conſcience, and
'will never Admire his Plenty that
'cannot make an Entertainment, with-
'out Furniſhing out the Table with
'Unclean Meats: and Conſidering Per-
'ſons will ſcarce think it a Demonſtra-
'tion of a Mans being a Wit, that
'he will Venture to be Damn'd to
'be Thought one. And that which
'Aggravates theſe Men's Prophane-
'neſs, and leaves them Excuſeleſs
'in it, is, that there are Few of theſe
'*Fools*, (for ſo the Wiſe-man calls
'them that *Make a Mock* of *Sinn:*) Pſal. 14. 1.
'that *have ſaid in their Hearts that*
'*there is no God*; or that the Scripture
'is not his Word. Their Diſ-reſpect
'to the Scripture ſpringing from their

'Vanity

'Vanity, not their Incredulity. They af-
'fect Singularity, for want of any thing
'else than is Singular: and finding in
'themselves Strong Desires of Con-
'spicuousness, with small Abilities to
'Attain it, they are Resolv'd with
'*Erostratus*, that Fir'd *Diana*'s Temple
'to be Talk'd of for having done so,
'to Acquire that Considerableness by
'their Sacrilege, which they must De-
'spair of from their Parts. And in-
'deed there want not many who have
'so Little Wit, as to Cry up all this
'sort of People for Great Wits. And
'as Withees, whilst they are sound
'grow Unregarded Trees; but when
'they once are Rotten, Shine in the
'Night: so many of these Pretenders,
'whilst they were not very Prophane,
'were (and that justly) esteemed
'very Dull; but now that their Parts
'are absolutely Corrupted and Per-
'verted, they grow Conspicuous, only
'because they are grown Deprav'd.
'And I shall make bold to continue
'the Comparison a little further, and
'Observe, that as this Rotten Wood
'Shines but in the Night; so many of
'these Pretenders pass for Wits but
'amongst them that are not Truly so.

For

'For Persons Really Knowing, can 'easily Distinguish betwixt that which 'Exacts the Title of Wit from our 'Judgments, and that which but Ap-'pears such to our Corruptions. And 'how often the Discourse we Cen-'sure is of the Latter sort, they need 'not be Inform'd that have Observ'd, 'how Many will Talk very Accepta-'bly in Derogation of Religion, whom 'upon other Subjects, their Partialest 'Friends acknowledge very Dull; and 'who are taken Notice of for Persons 'that seldome say any thing Well, 'but what 'tis Ill to say. And Que-'stionless there is no Small Number 'of these Scorners, whose Censures 'of the Scriptures Style are little less 'Guilty of Presumption than Pro-'faneness. I have of late Years met 'with Divers such Vain Pretenders, 'who blush not to Talk of Rhetorick 'more Magisterially than *Aristotle* or '*Tully* would; and superciliously to 'Deride, in Comparison of their 'own Writings and their's who 'Write like them, not the Bible only, 'but the Most Venerated Authors of 'Antiquity; and, to use *Asaph*'s 'Words; *They speak Loftily, they set* Psal. 73. 8, 9.

'their

'*their Mouth against the Heavens, and*
'*their Tongue walketh thorow the Earth*;
'they ſpeak Arrogantly and Cenſori-
'ouſly both of God and Men; whilſt
'themſelves oftentimes Underſtand no
'Tongue but their Mother's; and are
'Strangers enough to Rhetorick, not
'to know the Difference betwixt a
'Trope and a Figure, betwixt a Pro-
'ſopopœa and a Metaphore, or be-
'twixt a Climax and a Metonymy.
'Nor is our Wonder like to ceaſe, to
'find theſe Tranſcendent Wits, (as
'they are pleas'd to think themſelves,)
'ſo Undervalue the Scripture, by Con-
'ſidering the Rare Compoſures they
'Deſpiſe it for: theſe being Common-
'ly no other than ſome Drunken Song
'or Paltry Epigram, ſome Fawning
'Love-letter, or ſome ſuch other flaſhy
'Trifle, that doth much more argue a
'Depreſs'd Soul, than an Elevated
'Fancy. Some of theſe Gallants by
'their Tavern-Songs, uſe the Muſes
'like Anchovees, only to Entice Men
'to Drink: Another with more So-
'lemnity and Applauſe, makes the
'Muſes (what the French call) the
'Confidents of his Amours, Pro-
'ſtitutes his Wit to Evince and Cele-
brate

'brate the Defeat of his Reaſon, and 'never conſidering how apt Self-Love 'makes us to Magnifie any thing that 'Magnifies us, is Proud to have Wit 'aſcrib'd him by as Brib'd as Incom-'petent Judges of it, and takes it for 'as High a Proof as Deſirable a Fruit 'of Eloquence, to Perſwade a Vain 'Miſtreſs that She is Handſome and 'Ador'd, to whom t'were Eloquence 'indeed to be able to perſwade the 'Contrary. Divers of the Jews are 'wont to Mention the Names of De-'ceaſed Sinners, with that Brand ta-'ken out of the *Proverbs*, *May the* '*Name of the Wicked Rot*; but as the 'filthieſt Swine after their Death are 'Salted, and the Gammons made of 'their Fleſh, are ſerv'd in, all Stuck 'with Bays; ſo Divers that have 'Liv'd Notorious Epicures, have too 'often after their Death, not only their 'Names Salted (not to ſay Embalm'd) 'with flattering Epitaphs, and (I 'wiſh, ſeldomer, as flattering) Funeral 'Sermons; but have their Drunken 'or Luſtfull Rimes Extoll'd with ſuch 'Elogies by their ſurviving Reſem-'blers, that not only Good Chriſtians 'but Good Poets cannot but Grieve

'and Bluſh, thus to ſee Bayes, that 'ſhould be Appropriated to, and 'Crown that Heav'nly Gift call'd 'Poetry, When Mindfull of its Dig-'nity and Extraction, it Endears to us 'by our Fanſies, Truths that ſhould 'have an Influence on our Affections, '(by cloathing Excellent Thoughts in 'Suitable and Winning Dreſſes) Pro-'ſtituted and Degraded to make 'Wreaths for thoſe, who have no 'better Title to them, than a few Sen-'ſual Rimes, where the Dictates of '*Horace* are as little Conform'd to, as 'the Example of *David*; and the 'Laws of the Art, little leſs Violated 'than thoſe of Religion. 'Tis pleaſant 'to Obſerve in how many of ſuch 'Copies of Verſes, the Themes ap-'pear to have been made to the Con-'ceits, not the Conceits for the 'Themes, how often the Words are 'not ſo Properly the Cloaths of the 'Matter, as the Matter the Stuffing of 'the Words; how frequently Sub-'lime Non-ſenſe paſſes for Sublime 'Wit; and (though, according to 'my Notion of it, that is indeed True 'Wit, which 'tis more eaſie to Un-'derſtand, than 'tis not to Admire it,)

'how

'how commonly Confus'd Notions, 'and Abortive or Unlick'd Con-'ceptions are in Exotick Language, or 'Ambiguous Expreſſions, expoſ'd to 'the Uncertain Adoption of the Cour-'teous Reader; which the Writers are 'emboldned to expect Favourable, by 'finding Men once Thought (whether 'deſervedly or otherwiſe) Lofty 'Wits, to have ſo often the luck of 'Parrots, and of thoſe that Talk in 'their ſleep, who are not ſeldome Un-'derſtood by others, when they do 'not Underſtand themſelves. And ve-'ry much of Kin to their Verſes is 'their Proſe. For though I am far 'from denying that thoſe that have 'ſtore of Wit, may expreſs Some of 'it in an Addreſs to a Great Man, or 'in Writing to a Miſtreſs; yet as 'for ſuch Prophane Perſons I am now 'ſpeaking of, who rather would be 'Thought Wits, than are ſo, 'tis eaſie 'to diſcern, that very many of their 'almoſt as much Flatter'd as Flatter-'ing Letters of Love and Complement, 'are but Prologues to, and Paraphra-'ſes of the Subſcription (Your humble 'Servant.) Though Love be Univer-'ſally thought to make the Phanſie

'ſoar, (Lovers like ceel'd Pidgeons 'flying the Higher for having been 'Blinded) and though even the Wiſer 'obſerve, that, like War which is wont 'as well to Raiſe Soldiers of Fortune 'as to Ruine Men of Fortune, Love 'warms and elevates Leſſer Wits, 'though it too often Infatuate the 'Great ones: Yet a Witty Lady did 'not ſcruple to ſay frequently, that 'Give her but leave to barr half a 'ſcore Words, ſuch as ſhe pleas'd to 'name, and ſhe would undertake 'to Spoyl all the fine Letters of our 'Amorous Gallants. I applaud not 'the Severity of this Lady; and think 'her Challenge relliſhes as much of 'Vanity as Skill; but yet, to expreſs 'the ſenſe of theſe few Words, [I 'deſire You ſhould think I can Write 'well, am a Civil Perſon, and Your 'humble Servant,] being the Drift 'and Subſtance of moſt of theſe Cere-'monial Papers; theſe (oftentimes as 'Tedious as Servile) Amplificators, 'with all their Empty Multiplicity of 'Fine words, do but, like Market-peo-'ple, pay a Piece in Twenty Shillings. 'In Wits not bleſſ'd with ſolid Rea-'ſon and Learning, (that is, in moſt

'Rea-

'Readers) Phanſie being the Predo-
'minant Faculty, makes them reliſh
'thoſe Writings Moſt where Fanſy un-
'rivall'd reigns. And therefore, though
'I dare not ſay that it requires no
'Great Parts for thoſe to Write high
'and Acceptable Complements, that
'think nothing fit to be endeavour'd in
'Complements, but to make them
'Acceptable by making them High e-
'nough; (Flattery and Prophane-
'neſs ſeeming in ſuch Compoſures
'what Spots are in Leopards, Ble-
'miſhes that made a Great part of
'their Beauty) or for a Flatterer to
'perſwade thoſe Vain Perſons that
'will readily Believe a man, even
'when he doth not Believe himſelf:
'yet ſure it gives much Latitude
'and Liberty to a Writer, not to be
'Oblig'd to Believe what he Sayes, not
'Say but what he thinks either Will be
'or Ought to be believed. And truely,
'they that exerciſe their Pens on ei-
'ther ſort of Themes (I mean thoſe that
'require only New or Pleaſing Phan-
'ſies and Smooth Language; and thoſe
'that require Learning and Know-
'ledge pertinently and handſomely ex-
'preſt) do, I doubt, not find it much

'less difficult for Writers to Delight,
'where they propose themselves no
'Higher end, and scruple at nothing
'they judge Conducive to that Inferior
'one; than to Please, where to Do so
'is but a Subordinate End, which men
'allow not themselves neither the use
'of all proper means to attain; nor do
'I question but such Persons find it
'far more Easie to write Acceptably
'on Subjects, where they are not ty'd to
'speak either Reason or Truth; than to
'write Well on a Theme where men
'are Confin'd to write nothing but
'what they judge Usefull and what
'they can make Good; as conside-
'ring that they may be call'd to Ac-
'compt by Men for what they pub-
'lish; if not by God, both for their
'own Time and that of their Rea-
'ders. And indeed when I compare the
'most Applauded Trifles of these Un-
'dervaluers of the Scripture Style, with
'the Celebrating Discourses of it ex-
'tant in the Learned Writings of
'St. *Austin*, St. *Hierom*, *Tertullian* *La-*
'*ctantius*, *Chrysostom*, *Mirandula* and o-
'thers, whose penetrant and powerfull
'Arguments defeat not God's Ene-
Judg. 15. 15. 'mies, as *Samson* did the Philistines
'with

'with a Jaw-bone of an Asse, nor as
'*Shamgar* with an Ox-goad, (I mean Judg. 3. 31
'with blunt and despicable Weapons)
'but as *Elias* did with fire from Hea- 2 King. 1.
'ven: and whose Apologetical Defen- 10.
'ces of the spiritual *Jerusalem* are glit-
'tering and solid, as the Wall of the
'Heavenly *Hierusalem* is describ'd to
'be of *Jasper*, and the Foundations of
'the Wall garnished with all manner Rev. 21.
'of Pretious stones: when I compare, v. 10, 18,
'I say, the Compositures of our Frothy 19.
'Censurers with those of the Sacred
'Orators; me thinks I discern such
'a Difference betwixt them, as I have
'observ'd betwixt those justly admir'd
'Statutes I have seen in the Capitol,
'and the Larger sort of Babys that we
'find in the Exchange: for the Former,
'besides their Vastness, are so recom-
'mended by the Worth and Perma-
'nency of their Matter, the Excel-
'lency of the Workmanship, and the
'Nobleness of what they represent,
'that they are most priz'd by the Best
'Artists, and Time is not only unable
'to Consume them, but still Encrea-
'ses Men's value of them; whereas the
'Latter are little Trifles scarce welcom

'to any But Children in Underſtand-
'ing, and Admir'd only for a Gawdy
'Effeminate Dreſs, which will quick-
'ly either be Sully'd or Worn out; and a
'Faſhionableneſs which within a ſhort
'while will perhaps be Ridiculous.
'But ſuppoſing at length, that the Pro-
'phane Aſpirer ſhould be ſo lucky, or
'ſo Succeſsfull, (for Happy I cannot
'think it) as to attain the ſo Criminally
'courted Notedneſs, yet will he have
'no great cauſe to Boaſt the Purchaſe,
'when he ſeriouſly conſiders, That
'the Devil, who ſeduces Other ſinners
'like Men, with Current Coyn or
'ſparkling Jewels: (ſomething that
'either Advantages their Intereſts, or
'Delights their Senſes;) hath envea-
'gled him, like a Child, with a Whi-
'ſtle; a Trifle that only pleaſes with
'a tranſient and empty ſound; and,
'That Fame is a Bleſſing only in Re-
'lation to the Qualities, and the Per-
'ſons that give it: ſince otherwiſe the
'Tormented Prince of Devils himſelf
'were as Happy as he is Miſerable; and
'Famouſneſs unattended with Endear-
'ing Cauſes, is a Quality ſo Undeſira-
'ble, that even Infamy and Folly can
'confer it. As *Momus* is little leſs

'talk'd

'talk'd of than *Homer*; the Unjuſt *Pi-*
'*lat* is more Famous than *Ariſtides*
'the Juſt; and *Barabbas* his Name is
'ſignally recorded in Scripture, where-
'as the Penitent Thief is left unmen-
'tion'd. And ſure the higheſt Favors
'that Applauſe can impart, and the Be-
'ing (though never ſo loudly) cry'd
'up for a Wit, will hardly ſo repair
'the Puniſhment of Prophaneneſs, but
'that it's wretched Sufferer will find
'but Small Satisfaction in having his
'Name Celebrated in other Books,
'whilſt it is Blotted out of that of
'Life. And as for thoſe (you know
'who I mean) that aſpiring to Poſt-
'hume Glory, endeavour to acquire
'it by Irreligious Writings, deſtina-
'ted not to ſee the Light till their Au-
'thors be gone to the Region of Dark-
'neſs; I cannot but admire to ſee an
'Ambition that projects beyond the
'Grave, ſtep ſhort of Heaven: and
'cannot but think thoſe VVits the
'Greateſt Fools, who to tempt Praiſes
'they ſhall never Hear, provide them-
'ſelves Torments that they ſhall ever
'feel. For though Prophaneneſs by thoſe
'that are guilty of it be too often
'thought but a Small ſin, becauſe they
'look

'look upon it but as a Verbal one, yet 'I could eaſily repreſent it under ano- 'ther Notion, if I would here Re- 'peat what I have Diſcourſ'd touch- 'ing Indulgence to Reputedly Small 'and Verbal Sins in another Paper, 'from which, though I will not now 'tranſcribe any thing, yet I cannot 'but wiſh it were well conſider'd 'how Affronting Speeches concerning 'God's *Word* are like to be look'd up- 'on in that Great Day, when (to bor- 'row St. *Jude*'s terms) *The Lord ſhall* 'come with ten thouſands of his 'Saints, to execute Judgment upon 'all, and to convince all that are 'Ungodly among them* (not only) *of* 'all their Ungodly Deeds which they 'have Ungodly Committed*; (but) *al- 'ſo of all their hard Speeches which 'Ungodly Sinners have ſpoken againſt 'him*. And indeed theſe preſumed 'Peccadillos, though oftentimes in 'Health and Proſperity they appear 'not to us to blemiſh much our Con- 'ſciences, yet when in our Diſtreſſes, 'or at the Approaches of Death God 'comes, as the Prophet ſpeaks, to 'ſearch Men's Hearts as it were with 'Candles, and puniſh the Men that 'are

Jude verſ. 14, 15.

Zeph. 1. 12.

'*are ſetled upon their Lees*; (which
'whileſt a Liquor is, it may look
'Clear, and be taken for Defeca-
'ted, but a little Agitation of the
'Veſſel ſtrait makes it Troubled and
'Muddy) they appear in a Terrifying
'form. For as Paper written upon
'with Juyce of Lemons, may wear
'White (the Livery of Innocence)
'whileſt 'tis kept from the Fire; but
'being Held to it, Black Lines do pre-
'ſently appear: ſo out of many Con-
'ſciences that ſeem Clear in Proſperi-
'ty, the Fire of Adverſity draws out
'the Latent Blackneſſes, and makes us
'read things Undiſcern'd there before.
'And Queſtionleſs, If, as the Scrip-
'ture informs us, there are Sins whoſe Gen. 18. 21.
'Cry is able to reach Heaven; ſo Loud
'a Crime as the Prophaneneſs I am
'now ſpeaking of, is likely to do more
'than Whiſper there; eſpecially ſince
'it is much to be fear'd, that many of
'theſe *Scoffers* (as they ſeem to be call'd
'in the Scripture (2 *Pet.* 3. 3. and *Jude*
'verſ. 17, 18.) which they bear Witneſs
'To, by Cavilling At it) do *Rebel a-*
'*gainſt the Light*, and *Kick againſt the*
'*pricks* of their own Conſciences; ſuch
'a crime, I ſay, will be ſo far from
'Whiſpering in Heaven, that it will

'rather give an Alarm that will rowze
'up provoked Justice; whose Inflicti-
'ons, like Stones tumbled down from
'the Towers of an Assaulted Place, the
'Longer they are in Falling on men,
'the more Fatally they Oppress them;
Rev. 1. 15. 'in which regard perhaps, the Feet of
'our Saviour in the Apocalypse are de-
'scribed to be like unto Fine Brass, as
'if they burned, or glowed in a Fur-
'nace; to intimate, that though he be
'very Slow in his march to Destroy the
'Wicked, yet he is as Sure, when once
'he pleases to tread them under foot,
'to Crush and Consume them. If
'there be no Injury that more Exaspe-
'rates than Contempt, nor no Con-
'tempt that more Provokes than that
'which offends Directly and Imme-
'diately (the Affronters thereby pro-
'claiming that they are neither A-
'sham'd nor Afraid of Angering) how
'Provoking may we think that Crime
'which makes God the Subject of our
'Derision; and that with so Little Cir-
'cuition, as to abuse that Word, which
'he so solemnly declar'd his Mind by
'to Mankind: *Plutarch*, to Manifest how
'much some Idolaters did more In-
'cense the Deity than some Atheists,
'tells us, he should esteem himself Less

'in-

'injur'd by the Man that ſhould Doubt
'or Deny that there was ever any ſuch
'Man as *Plutarch*; than by him that
'ſhould Affirm that there was ſuch a
'one indeed, but that he was an Old
'Fellow, that us'd, like the Poets
'*Saturn*, to Devour his Children; and
'was guilty of thoſe other Crimes
'imputed by the Heathen to their
'Gods. Upon a like Account we may
'eſteem God Leſs Provok'd by their
'Unbelief that doubt or reject the
'Scripture, than by their Prophane-
'neſs that make ſo Sacrilegiouſly bold
'with it; ſince the Latter impute to
'God the Enditing of what they en-
'deavour to make men think fit to
'have Sport made with it. This of
'Prophaneneſs is ſo Empty and Un-
'profitable a Sin, that it ſcarce gets
'the Practiſer any thing but an Ill
'Name amongſt Good Men upon
'Earth, and a Worſe Place amongſt
'Bad Men in Hell; by making his En-
'mity to Piety ſo Malicious and ſo
'Diſintereſted, that he will endeavour
'to do Religion Harm, though it
'be to do Himſelf no good. He is
'ſuch a Volunteer Sinner, that he hath
'neither the Wit nor the Excuſe of
'declining his Conſcience in Comple-
'ment

'ment to his Senſes: and though he 'ever makes but an Ill Bargain, that 'gets in Hell too Boot, yet thoſe I 'would Reclaim, come far ſhort of 'the Comparative Wiſdom of their 'Folly, who to gain So Conſiderable '(though yet over-purchas'd) a Poſſeſ-'ſion as the Whole World, ſhould 'part with their own Souls. And 'ſure a Sin that is Injurious to God's 'Glory, and is apt to Subvert (what 'He and Good Men Prize next,) the 'dearly purchas'd, immortal, and in-'valuable Souls of Men; and to *De-*
Rom. 14, 15. '*ſtroy them for whom Chriſt Dyed*; 'will not by being Verbal be Prote-'cted from being Hainous: and to 'thoſe that Practiſe it, I ſhall recom-'mend the Latter half of the Epiſtle of '*Jude*; which though it ſeem Proper-'ly to relate to the Gnoſticks, or Car-'pocrations of his Time, will deſerve a 'trembling Attention from thoſe that 'revive the ſins there Condemned, 'in Ours; and who would do well by 'Seaſonably conſidering the Fate there 'threatned to their Predeceſſors, to 'Tremble at their Crime. But for 'Fear of Loſing it, I ſhall not ſpend 'more Time in endeavouring to Diſa-'buſe our Scorners; whom I ſhould

'have left to the Quiet Enjoyment 'of their unenvi'd Self-admiration; 'had not their Deſpizing the Scripture 'upon a Preſumption of their own 'Matchleſs Wit, (like *Jeroboam* that 'forſook that Incomparable Structure, 'the Temple, where God did ſo Glo-'riouſly and Peculiarly Manifeſt him-'ſelf to Men; to Worſhip Calves of 'his own making, 1 *King.* 12. 28,32.) 'Engag'd me, in Conformity to the 'VViſe-man's Counſel in ſuch Caſes, 'to *Anſwer the Fool according to his* '*Folly, leſt he be Wiſe in his own Con-* Proverbs. '*ceit:* for my Reproofs are addreſt to 26. 5. 'thoſe call'd VVits, but as they are 'Traducers or Undervaluers of the 'Scripture; not as they either Pre-'tend to, or Enjoy, a Quality, which I 'have the Juſtice to Eſteem, though 'not the Happineſs to Poſſeſs: and 'which my Value for It, and my Cha-'rity for Men, makes me Troubled to 'ſee Arrogated by many that VVant 'it; and by too many that Have it, 'Proſtituted to Gratifie other People's 'Pride, or their own Luſts. How much 'happier were it for Perſons of Choice 'Parts to employ them, as *Bezaleel* and '*Aholiab* did Theirs, in working for 'the Sanctuary: in Aſſerting and Em-

An Appendix to the former Digreſſion, inviting one ſort of Witty men to make amends for the Prophaneneſs of another.

'belliſhng Divinity: The Structure
'will not alone deſerve the Skilfulleſt
'Hand; but though it reject not Goat's
'hair, and colour'd Badger's skins, will
'admit not onely Purple and Fine
'Twined Linnen, but Gold, Silver, and
Exod. 23. 3,4,5, &c. 'precious ſtones: the richeſt orna-
'ments that Learning and Eloquence
'can Grace Theology with, being not
'onely Merited by that Heavenly ſub-
'ject, but being Applicable to it, as
'much to their Own Advantage as to
'that of their Theme. We ſee how
'Ambitious men are to leave a Good
'Name behind them, and appear in the
'Habit of Virtue to their Own and
'After times. Witneſs the Arti-
'fices and Hypocriſie men generally
'Veyl, or Diſguize their Sins with; and
'the Flattering Epitaphs, with which
'ſo many Vitious Perſons endeavour
'to conveigh themſelves to the Good
'opinion of poſterity. Now they that
'write piouſly as well as handſomly,
'have the advantage of getting them-
'ſelves the Reputation as well of vir-
'tuous as of able men, and beſides
'that Double Recompence may expect
'a third, (Tranſcending both) in Hea-
'ven, where they that (in the True
Dan. 12. 3. 'Scripture ſenſe) be *Wiſe, ſhall ſhine as*
'*the*

'*the brightneſs of the Firmament*, *and* '*they that turn many to Righteouſneſs*, '*as the Stars for ever and ever*. Tis 'the general Complaint and Grief of 'Perſons truly Zealous, that there 'are many more Wits and Grandees 'now-adayes, who, by Perverting 'God's Gifts to the Service of Idols '(of Pride or Pleaſure) of their own 'ſetting up, reſemble the Degenerate '*Jewiſh* Church, of whom God com-'plains by *Hoſea*, that *ſhe did not know* Hoſ. 2. 8. '*that He gave her the Corn and Wine* '*and Oyl*, *and multiplyed her Silver* '*and her Gold which they prepared* '*for Baal*; than that, (by an humble 'Dedication of their Choiceſt Abili-'ties to God's ſervice) imitate holy '*David* and his Princes; who having 'Conſecrated their Gold and Silver 'and Precious ſtones, towards the En- 1 Chron. 'riching and Embelliſhing of the Tem- 29. 'ple, Perfum'd that Vaſt Offering 'with this Acknowledgment to God; '*All things come of thee and thine* Verſ. 14. '*own have we given thee*. But though 'now I know divers Great Perſons 'and Great Wits amongſt us, who, ve-'ry unmindful of that Text, *What haſt* 1 Cor. 4. '*thou that thou didſt not receive*, like 7.

'thoſe Ungratefull Clouds that Ob-
'ſcure the *Sun* that Rais'd them, Op-
'poſe the Glory of that God who Ele-
'vated them to that Height; yet I do
'not abſolutely Deſpair, that as God
'hath been pleas'd to make uſe of ſe-
'veral Royal Pens for the Tracing of
'his Word, and to make a Perſon
'Learned in all the Wiſdome of the
'*Egyptians*, his Firſt *S*ecretary: ſo he
'will one day engage both the Gran-
'dees and the Wits to ſtrive to Ex-
'piate by their Devotion and *S*ervice
'to the Scripture, the Injuries that Ir-
'religious Parts and Greatneſs have
'done it. I will not tell you *Theophilus*,
'that an Early Study of Religion would
'gain to its Party, moſt of thoſe ma-
'ny Wits that will be ſure to con-
'tend for what ever Opinion is expreſ-
'ſed by the Wittieſt things they can
'ſay. But I will tell you, that a par-
'ticular Conſideration that makes me
'wiſh to ſee Witty Writers more
'generally employ their Pens on the
'behalf of Religion, is, that the Ser-
'vices they do it, Endear it to them: for
'as *Macchiavel* ſmartly obſerves, and as
'the Love of Parents and Nurſes to
'Children may Evince; *La natura de*
'*gli*

Nicholo Macchiavelli, nel lib. o del *Principe*, c. 10.

'*gli huomini è, cosi obligasi per li bene-*
'*ficii che esse fanno, come per quelli che*
'*essi ricevono.* It is Natural to Men,
'to be as well Engag'd by the Kind-
'nesses they do, as by those they Re-
'ceive. And for the Encouragement
'of the Possessors of Great Parts to
'Employ them on Religious Themes,
'such as the Holy Scripture; I shall
'Represent to them, that even that Im-
'mortality of Name which Worldly
'Writers (for the Most Part) solely
'Aim at; is not by Pious Writers
'Less Found for being Last Sought:
'their Theme Contracts not their
'Fame by a true Diminution, but only
'by Comparison to a Greater Good:
'their Looking upon their Own Glory
'but as an Accession to God's, not
'Hindring Others from Praising that
'Wit and Eloquence they Praise God
'with; as Beauty made it self Admi-
'rers, though in Vestals; and a Rare
'Voice may Ravish us with a Psalm;
'or as the Jewels that Adorn'd it,
'shone with their Wonted Luster on
'*Aaron's* Breast-Plate. Yes, *as God-*
'*liness is Profitable unto all things, ha-* 1 Tim. 4.
'*ving Promise of the Life that now is,* 8.
'*and of that which is to come*; and as the

'*Hundred-fold now in this time*, is
'very Consistent with the *Eternal Life*
Mark 10. '*in the World to come*; So is it very
30. 'Possible for the same Pious Writer to
'have his Name Written, at once in
'both those Immortal Books of Life
'and Fame; and, (like the Inspir'd
'Poet, Holy *David*,) wear as well
'Here a Crown of Lawrel, as Here-
1 Pet. 5. 'after, τὸν ἀμαράντινον τῆς δόξης στέφανον,
4. 'that Unfading Crown of Glory Saint
'*Peter* speaks of. And though we are
'too Generally now a Dayes grown
'so Sinful, that we Scarce Relish any
'Composure that Endeavours to Re-
'claim us from being so; yet Less
'Licentious and More Discerning
'Times, (which may be, perhaps, ap-
'proaching) will Repair the Omissi-
'ons and Fastidiousness of the Pre-
'sent, by an Eminent Gratitude to
'the Names of those, that have La-
'bour'd to Transmit to others, in the
'Handsomest Dress they Durst give
'them, the Truths themselves most
'Valu'd. And I Observe, that though
'*Solomon* himself, delivered so many
'Thousand Songs and Proverbs, and
'the Nature of Beasts, Birds, Rep-
'tiles, and Fishes, together with the

'History

'History of Plants from the *Cedar of*
'*Lebanon, even to the Hyſop that ſprin-* 1 King. 4.
'*geth out of the Wall*: yet thoſe three 31, 32, 33.
'only Treatiſes, deſign'd Peculiarly
'for the Inſtruction of the Church,
'Survive their loſt Companions. And
'as Antiently the *Manna* which the
'Iſraelites gathered to Employ in their
'Domeſtick Uſes, laſted not Unpu-
'trifi'd above a Day or Two; but
'that which they Lay'd up in the San-
'ctuary to Perpetuate or Secure God's
'Glory, continu'd whole Ages Uncor-
'rupted: ſo the Books Written to
'ſerve our Private turns of Intereſt or Exod. 16.
'Fame, are oftentimes Short-liv'd; verſ. 20.
'when thoſe conſecrated to God's 33, 34.
'Honour, are, for that End's ſake,
'Vouchſaf'd a Laſtingneſs and kept
'from Periſhing. And thoſe many
'Dull and Uneloquent Gloſſes and
'Expoſitions of the Antient Jews,
'that the Merit of their Theme hath
'preſerv'd for ſo many Ages, may
'aſſure us, that the Scripture doth of-
'ten make their Names and Writings
'that Illuſtrate it, Partakers of its own
'Prerogative of Immortality. Not to
'Mention that (according to that of Pſal. 119.
'the Pſalmiſt, *I have more Underſtan-* 99.

'ding than all my Teachers; because (כו) thy Testimonies are my Meditation) such an Employment of Parts doth oftentimes Invite God to Encrease them; as he that had Most Talents committed to him, for Improving them to his Lord's Service, was Trusted with More of them; and he who employ'd some Few Cups of his Wine to Entertain our Saviour, had whole Vessels of his VVater turn'd into Better VVine. Certainly, Transcendent Wits, when once they Addict Themselves to Theological Compositures, Improve and Grace most Excellently Themes so capable of Being so Improv'd. They need small Time to Signalize their Pens; for Possessing already in a Sublime Degree all the Requisites and Appropriates of Rare VVriters, they need but Apply that Choice Knowledge and Charming Eloquence to Divine Subjects, to handle them to Admiration; as *Hiram* successfully us'd the Skil he had Learned in *Tyre*, in the Building and Adorning of God's Temple; and *Jephthah* Victoriously Employ'd the Military Gallantry and Art that had made him

Mat. 25. 28.

John 2. to the Tenth Verse inclusively.

1 King. 7. 13, 14, &c.

'him conſiderable in the Land of *Tob*,
'in Defending the Cauſe, and Defea- Judg. 11.
'ting the Enemies of God. Of this
'Truth the Primitive Times afford us
'Numerous and Noble Inſtances;
'but eſpecially that Stupendious Wit
'Saint *Auſtin*, (whom I dare Oppoſe,
'to any of the Wits that have Dar'd to
'oppoſe the Scripture) the Productio-
'ons of whoſe Wit in his Unregene-
'rate State, and after his Converſion
'to the Catholick Faith and Piety,
'oblige me to Reſemble him to *Aaron*'s
'Rod; (which ſuppoſing the Truth of
'their Opinion that think it to be the
'ſame that *Moſes* us'd) whilſt it was
'Employ'd abroad, did indeed for a Numb. 17.
'while work Wonders, that made it 4, 8.
'much Admir'd: but when once it
'came to be Laid up in the Taberna-
'cle, unconfin'd to the uſual Laws of o-
'ther Plants, it ſhot forth and afforded
'permanent Fruit in a Night. But,
'*Theophilus*, to Recover my ſelf at
'length from my Over-prolix Di-
'greſſion, I muſt Remember, that
''twas Objected, that as well Divers
'Great Princes and Great States-men,
'as many Great Wits, Diſ-eſteem, or
'at leaſt Neglect, the Scripture: And

'indeed, though I am Sorry it Cannot,
'yet it must not be Deny'd, that Not-
'withstanding all the Prerogatives of
'the Bible, there needs not much Ac-
'quaintance with Great Men, to shew
'many of them, that though they
'Deny not God to be the Author,
'Deny themselves the Blessing of be-
'ing Readers of it: some out of La-
'zineſs, and others out of Pride:
'both which Lurk under the Pretext
'of Multiplicity of Important Avoca-
'tions. But since, Your Quality,
'*Theophilus*, and Station in the World,
'may either make You Need to be
'Arm'd against this Temptation, or
'give you Opportunities to Assist those
'that are Endanger'd by it, give me
'leave on this Occasion, to tell you,
'That those Grandees that pretend
'Want of Leisure for their Neglect
'of the Reading of the Scripture,
'must be able to give a Rare Account
'of all the Portions of their Time, to
'make those Pass for a Mis-employ-
'ment of it, that are Lay'd out to-
'wards the Purchase of a Happy Eter-
'nity, which 'tis not over-Modest for
'those to expect from God, that
'Grudge him the Rent of that Time,

'of

'of which they are but his Tenants
'at Will. But to Manifeſt how un-
'likely this Pretence is to paſs Cur-
'rent; I ſhall Repreſent, that in the
'ſelf-ſame Chapter where God faſhi-
'ons a King fit to Govern his own
'People; he enjoyns concerning the
'Book of the Law, that *It ſhall be* Deut. 17.
'*with him, and he ſhall Read therein* 18, 19.
'*all the Dayes of his Life*; which the
'Next Verſe intimates ſhall be there- verſ. 20.
'by Prolonged: and indeed it often
'happens, that as *Samuel*'s Barren Mo- 1 Sam. 2.
'ther for Lending one of her Chil- 20, 21.
'dren freely unto the Lord, was Bleſt
'with many others; ſo the Dayes
'Conſecrated to God's Service, rather
'Improve than Impoveriſh our Stock
'of Time. Nay, the King was, (in verſ. 18.
'that Place of *Deuteronomy*) not onely
'Oblig'd to Read the Law, but to
'Write it too: upon which Sub-
'ject, if I Miſ-remember not, the
'Learned'ſt of the Rabbies tells us, *Rambam*;
'that the King (as indeed God uſually or, *Rabbi*
'Charges Eminence of Place with *Moſes ben*
'Eminence of Piety) was Bound to *Maimon.*
'Write it out himſelf, and that, As
'King: for though before his Aſcen-
'ding the Throne, as any other Iſrae-
'lite,

'lite, he had a Tranſcript of his own
'Writing; yet was there annext to
'the Acquiſt of the Regal Scepter, a
'Duty of Copying with the ſame
'Hand that ſway'd it. To *Joſhuah* both
'a General and a Judge; who was to
'Wield the Swords, both of *Aſtrea*
'and of *Bellona*; to Govern one Nu-
'merous People and Conquer ſeven;
'the Words of God are very Remar-
Joſh. 1. 8. 'kable; *This Book of the Law ſhall not*
'*Depart out of thy Mouth, but thou ſhalt*
'*Meditate therein Day and Night, that*
'*thou maiſt obſerve to do according to all*
'*that is Written therein; for then thou*
'*ſhalt make thy way Proſperous, and then*
'*thou ſhalt have good Succeſs.* *David*
'was a Shepherd, a Conqueror, and
'a King, and had certainly no Unfre-
'quent Diſtractions, both Before he
'came to the Crown, (whilſt he liv'd
'a Deſpis'd Younger-Brother, an
'Envy'd Courtier, a Diffident Fugi-
'tive, and a Diſtruſted Captain) and
'After, whilſt he Wore, Loſt, and
'Regain'd it: but how little the Time
'employ'd in the Study of the Scrip-
'ture prejudic'd his Secular Affairs,
'his Story and Succeſſes may atteſt;
'and how Large a Portion of his Time

'that

'that Study shar'd, You may be Plen-
'tifully inform'd by Himself, and save
'me the Transcribing much of the
'Book of Psalms. He gather'd Bayes
'both on *Parnassus* and in the Field of
'Honor; and Equally Victorious in
'Duels and in Battels, his Exploits
'and his Conquests were Such, as
'(Transcending those in Romances
'almost as much in their Strangeness
'as their Truth) needed an Infallible
'Historian to Exact a Belief, their
'Greatness and their Number would
'dissuade: he added to his Regal
'Crown of Gold, Two others (of
'Bayes and Lawrel) which his Suc-
'cessfull Sword and Numerous Pen,
'Making him both a Conqueror and a
'Poet, Gain'd him from Victory and
'the Muses: and yet for all this Great-
'ness and this Fame, and that Multi-
'tude of Distractions that still Attends
'them, the (then Extant) Scripture
'was so Unsever'dly his Study, and he
'so Duely Match'd in his Practice what
'the Apostle Couples in his Precept,
'*Diligence in Business*, and *Fervency* Rom. 12.
'*in Spirit*, that 'tis not Easie Fitlier
'to Resemble him, than to the Wing'd
'Cherubims in the Old Tabernacle,
'whom

'whom all the Gold and Jewels that
'Glittered about them, and all the
'Clouds of Incense Fum'd before
Deut. 25. 18, 19, 20, 21. 'them, could never divert from a Fix'd
'Posture towards the Ark of the Te-
'stimony that Contain'd the Law, and
'the Mercy-Seat that Represented
'Christ. And indeed, 'tis a Saying
'Equally Antient and True, That
'None should know (things Better
'and) Better Things than Princes.
'For their Virtues and their Vices par-
'ticipate the Eminence and Authority
'of their Condition; and by an Influ-
'ential Exemplariness, so Generally
'Fashion and Sway their Subjects,
'that as we find in Sacred Story that
'the Jewes serv'd God or *Baal* as their
'Kings did; so Prophane History tells
'us, that *Rome* was Warlike under
'*Romulus*, Superstitious under *Numa*,
'and so Successively Moulded into the
'Dispositions of her Several Princes.
'Subjects, all the World over, being
'apt to think Imitation a Part of the
'Duty of Obedience: and being Ge-
'nerally but too Sensible of the Re-
'quisiteness of their being Like their
'Prince to the being Lik'd by Him; A
'State, like *Nebuchadnezzar*'s Mysteri-

'ous

'ous Image, ſhould have the Head of
'Gold; and the Inferior Members of Dan. 2.
'a Value Proportionate to their Vici- 31, 32.
'nity to that Nobleſt Part. When &c.
'once I ſhall ſee ſuch Monarchies and
'Common-wealths no Rarities; and
'ſee the Addictedneſs of Princes to
'the Study of the Scripture, Further
'the Ulterior Accompliſhment of that
'Part of it, which once Promis'd Gods
'People, *that Kings ſhould be its Nur-* Eſay 49.
'*ſing Fathers, and their Queens its* 23.
'*Nurſing Mothers*; I ſhall Expect to
'ſee the Golden Age elſewhere than
'in Poets Dreams. For I take not
'Abſoluteneſs to be like a Plague,
'whoſe Almoſt boundleſs Power is
'Confin'd to Do Miſchief; but I e-
'ſteem Soveraignty little leſs Appli-
'cable and Effectual to Good than
'Ill: *Trajan* and *Conſtantine* were as
'Great and Publick Bleſſings, as *Nero*
'or *Caligula* were Miſchiefs; and Vir-
'tue on a Throne hath not a much
'leſs Imperious Influence, than
'Crowned Vice. And accordingly I
'ſhall permit my Good Wiſhes for
'Mankind to turn Expectations, when
'I ſhall generally ſee Soveraigns No-
'bly contend for as great a Superiority
'over

'over Each other by their Vertues, as 'they poſſeſs over their Subjects by 'their Fortune; when I ſhall ſee *Po-* 'tentates make uſe of *Mars*'s Sword, 'but to Reſtrain others from Abuſing 'it; and Kings affect their Reſem- 'blance to God, leſs in his Unlimi- 'tedneſs of Power than his Employ- 'ment of it. But, to ſtep Back in- 'to my Way, and, leaving Princes to 'fitter Monitors, ſay ſomething to 'Men of either Great Titles or Em- 'ployments. There's none of theſe 'Pragmatical Perſons that will ſuffer 'himſelf to be ſo Enſlav'd to his Bu- 'ſineſs, but he will allow himſelf Set 'Times, and can Daily Find Leiſure 'for Eating, Drinking, and other 'Corporal Refections, and Frequent- 'ly for Recreations; and Certainly, 'if we Valu'd not our Bodies above 'our Souls, we would, in ſpite of the 'Urgency of Secular Affairs and Em- 'ployments, Reſerve and Set apart 'Some Time to Feed our Souls, with 'their true Food, God's Word; elſe 'we ſhall never be Able to ſay of God 'with Holy *Job*; *I have eſteemed the* Job 23. 12. 'Words of his Mouth more than my Ne- 'ceſſary Food. I will not urge that *Da-*

'niel,

'*niel*, whose Vast Abilities had a Re-
'sembling Theater, and who Surpass'd
'other States-men as much in the
'Number and Weight of the Affairs
'he had to Manage, as in the Excel- Dan. 6. 3.
'lent Spirit and Dexterity wherewith
'he Manag'd them, amidst Transacti-
'ons that Busi'd Sixscore Princes, who
'Loaded him with a Weight (of
'Business) capable to have Crush'd
'*Atlas*, could yet find Leasure to
'Study the Prophet *Jeremy*: because Dan. 9. 2.
'twill be perhaps more proper to
'Mention, that even *Macchiavel* him-
'self, that Secretary and Reputed Ora-
'cle of State, could find Time not Only
'to Read but to Write Playes, (some
'of which I have seen in Italian) such
'as I would not think Excellent,
'though a Person from whom so much
'might be Expected, had not Writ-
'ten them. Let us not then Think our
'Business or our Recreations a suffici-
'ent Dispensation from an Employ-
'ment, for which, were they Incon-
'sistent, they ought Both to be De-
'clin'd; since it is both more Con-
'cerning than the First, and more Satis-
'fying than the Latter. But that
'which is often the True, though sel-
'dome

'dome the Avowed Cauſe of theſe 'Men's Neglect of the Scripture, is 'not their Unleaſur'dneſs, but their 'Pride; which makes them think it 'too Mean and Trivial an Employ-'ment for one that is Great and Wiſe 'enough to Counſel and Converſe 'with Princes, and have a Vote or 'Hand in thoſe Great Enterprizes and 'Tranſactions that make ſuch a Noiſe 'in the World, and are the Loud 'Themes of the People's Talk and 'Wonder; to Amuſe themſelves to 'Examine the Significations of Words 'and Phraſes. For my part I am no 'Enemy to the Calling of States-men; 'I think their Profeſſion as Requiſite as 'others in a Common-wealth; and 'ſhould think it very Injurious to De-'ny them any part of a Purchaſe they 'pay their Care and Time for: nor 'perhaps have I ſo little Study'd the 'Improvements of Quiet, as to think 'my ſelf Leſs Oblig'd than others are, 'to thoſe whoſe Watchings or Pro-'tection Affords it or Secures it me. But 'after all this is ſaid, I love to Look 'upon the World with his Eyes that 'is juſtly ſaid to *Humble himſelf* (when 'he Vouchſafes) *to behold the things*

Pſal. 113. 6.

'*that*

'*that are done in Heaven and in Earth*;
'and to take Meaſure of the Dimen-
'ſions of Things by the Scale his
'Word holds forth. Now in the
'Eſteem of him that Hath made all
'things for himſelf, and of whom his
'Spirit by his Prophet truly ſayes, that
'the *Nations are as a Drop of a*
'*Bucket, and are counted as the ſmall*
'*Duſt of the Ballance*, Nay, that *All*
'*Nations before him* (*are*) *as Nothing,* Eſay 40.
'*and they are counted to him leſs than* 13.-17.
'*Nothing and Vanity*; the Importan-
'teſt Employments are the Study and
'the Glory of God. He Created this
'Vaſt Fabrick of the World to ma-
'nifeſt his Wiſdome, Power, and
'Goodneſs; and in it Created Man,
'that it may have an Intelligent Spe-
'ctator, and a Reſident whoſe Ratio-
'nal Admiration of ſo Divine a Stru-
'cture, may Accrue to the Glory of
'the Omniſcient and Almighty Ar-
'chitect. And as he Created the
'World to manifeſt ſome of his At-
'tributes, ſo doth he Uphold and Go-
'vern it to Diſcloſe others of them.
'The Revolution of Monarchies, the
'Fates of Princes, and Deſtinies of
'Nations, are but Illuſtrious Inſtan-

ces and Proclamations of his Providence. The whole Earth once Periſh'd by Water to Signalize his Juſtice on his Enemies; and the whole VVorld ſhall one Day Periſh by Fire to (Exerciſe that Former Attribute and) Evidence his Goodneſs to his Children: for whom his Faithfulneſs to his Promiſes will Oblige him to Build a Glorioufer Manſion for ſuch Glorify'd Reſidents. The Angels, ſome of whom the Viſions of *Daniel* Repreſent us at the Helm of Kingdomes and of Empires, and whoſe Power is ſo Great, that One of them could in One Night Deſtroy a Force capable, if Divided, to have made half a Dozen Formidable Armies; theſe Glorious Spirits, I ſay, whoſe Nature ſo Tranſcends ours, that the very Devil can without the Aſſiſtance of Virtue, Deſpiſe the Objects of our Ambition by a Superiority of Nature onely; for all their high Prerogatives and Employments, think the Myſteries unfolded in Scripture, worthy their Bowing as well as Deſire to Look into: think not themſeves too Eminent to be Meſſengers and Heralds, of which Fond Mortals

Dan. 10. 13.

2 King. 19. 35.

παρακύψαι. 1 Pet. 1. 12.

'Mortals think themselves too Eminent
'to Read: and (being all *Ministring*
'*Spirits sent forth to Minister to them* Heb. 1.14.
'*who shall be Heirs of Salvation*;) dis-
'dain not to think our Instruction
'worth their Concern, whilest we dis-
'dain a Concern for our Own Instru-
'ction; Nay, the very Messias, whose
'Style is *King of Kings and Lord of* Revel. 17.
'*Lords*, though he be not Recorded to 14.
'have ever Read but Once; did yet Luke 4.
'Read the Scripture; and think it wor- 17, &c.
'thy his Expositions and Recommend-
'ing; and well may any think that
'Book worth the Reading, that God
'himself thought worth the Enditing.
'When *Moses* and *Elias* left their
'(Local not Real) Heaven, and Ap-
'peared in Glory to Converse with our
'Transfigured Saviour on the Mount;
'their Discourse was not of the Go-
'vernment of Kingdomes, or the Rai-
'sing of Armies for the Subversion of
'Empires; or of those other solemn
'Trifles, which Heaven places as much
'beneath Men's Thoughts as Resi-
'dence; but of (the Inspir'd Book's
'Chief Theme) *His Decease which he* Luke 9.
'*should accomplish at Jerusalem.* And 31.
'after that St. *Paul* had been Caught

2 Cor. 12. 2. 'up to the Third Heaven, and had 'been Blest and Refin'd with his In- 'effable Entertainment there; I won- 'der not to find him profess so reso- 'lutely, that He *counteth all things* Phil. 3. 8. '*but loss for the Excellency of the* 'Knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; 'in whom *Faith cometh by Hearing, and* Rom. 10. 17. '*that Hearing, of the Word of God*; and 'who addresses Men to the Scriptures, 'as those which Testifie of him. And 'perhaps our Saviour us'd so frequent- 'ly to conclude his Divine Discour- 'ses, with that just Epiphonema, *He* John 5. 39. '*that hath Ears to hear, let him hear*, but 'to Teach us, that there is no Employ- 'ment of our Faculties that more de- 'serve their Utmost Attention, than the 'Scrutiny of Divine Truths. That 'which is pretended to by this Dis- 'course, is to Impress this Truth, That 'where God is allow'd to be an Intel- 'ligent and Equal Valuer of Things, 'a Man cannot have so Great an Em- 'ployment, as to give him Cause to 'think the Study of the Scripture a 'Mean one: since, Thus saith the Jer. 9. 23, 24. 'Lord, *Let not the Wise-man Glory in his* 'Wisdome, *neither let the Mighty man* 'Glory *in his Might, let not the Rich man*

'Glory

'*Glory in his Riches: But let him that*
'*Glorieth, glory in this, that he Under-*
'*ſtandeth and Knoweth me.* For ſure, if
'the Knowledge of God be ſo Glori-
'ous a thing, the Study of that Book
'whence that Knowledge is Extracted,
'and where tis moſt Refulgent, is not a
'Deſpicable Employment. Which ſure
'(to add That upon the By) 'tis ſome-
'what Injuriouſly Thought by thoſe,
'who are ſo Induſtrious and Proud
'in Prophane Hiſtories and other Po-
'litical Books to Diſcover (or even
'Gueſs at) thoſe Intrigues, which
'commonly but tell us, by what Craf-
'ty Arts a Knave Coſen'd a Fool.
'Nor (to mention this by the By) even
'in Relation to his Own Profeſſion, is
'the Scripture Unable to recompenſe
'the Study of a Chriſtian Stateſ-man;
'for to omit the (perhaps too) Extol-
'ling Mention *Macchiavel* himſelf
'makes of *Moſes* amongſt the Famou-
'ſeſt Legiſlators; the Hiſtorical part
'of the Bible being endited by an Om-
'niſcient and Unerring Spirit, layes
'cleerly open the True and Genuine
'Cauſes of the Eſtabliſhment, Flou-
'riſhing, and Viciſſitudes of the Prin-
'ces and Common-wealths it Relates

The Apologist for, and Antagonist of Romances.

'the Story of. Whereas other Histo-
'ries (for Reasons insisted on in other
'Papers) are liable to Great Suspitions
'in the Judgment of those that Duely
'ponder the Several Narratives made
'often of the same Transaction or E-
'vent by Several Eye-witnesses: and
'that the true Secret of Counsels is so
'Closely Lock'd up, or so Artificially
'Disguised, that to have Interest e-
'nough to Discern (what States-men
'Mind and Build on) the Truth and
'Mystery of Affairs, one must be
'Bias's'd and Engag'd enough to be
'Shrewdly Tempted to be a Partial
'Relator of them. But, *Theopilus*, I
'perceive I have slip'd into too Long a
'Digression; which yet I hope you
'will Pardon as the Effect of an In-
'discreet, perhaps, but however a
'Great Concern for a Person, to whom
'Nature, Education, and Fortune have
'been so Indulgent, that I cannot but
'look upon his Condition as lyable to
'the Temptations which either Parts
'or Employments Singly, and much
'more Both together, are wont to ex-
'pose men to.

The fifth and last Answer to the last Objection.

You may remember, *Theophilus*, that among the Answers which I told You might

might be made to those that Objected against the Scripture, *That it is so unadorn'd, and so ill furnish'd with Eloquent Expressions, that 'tis wont to prove Inefficacious, especially upon Intelligent Readers,* The fifth and last was this, *That 'tis very far from being agreeable to Experience, that the Style of the Scripture does make it Unoperative upon the Generality of its Readers, if they be not Faultily indispos'd to receive Impressions from it.*

To make good this Reply, I must take Notice to You, that, that part of the Objection which intimates that Intelligent Readers are not wont to be wrought upon by the Scripture, has been in great part Answer'd already; For I have lately observ'd to You, that as it may be granted, that *some* Witty Men, who have Read the Scripture, have instead of Admiring it, Quarrell'd with it; so it cannot be deny'd, that *many* Persons as Eminent for Wit as they, have upon Reading it Entertain'd a high Veneration for it. So that I see not why the Celebrations of those Wits that Admire it, may not Counter-ballance the Dis-respects of those that Cavil at it. Especially if we consider, that as to most of those that are

look'd upon as the Witty Disregarders of the Scripture, scarce any thing so much, as the Vanity and Boldness of owning that they Disregard it, makes them (but Undeservedly) be Look'd upon as Wits.

But to this, I shall now add, that whereas the Objection speaks of Intelligent Readers, the greatest Part of such have not that Quickness which is wont to make Men pass for Wits, though they may have other Abilities more Solid, and desirable: And yet that the Bible has a great Influence upon this Latter sort of Intelligent Readers, I presume You will easily Believe, if You consider how many Great Scholars, not onely Profess'd Divines, but others, have by their Learned Comments and other Writings, endeavour'd either to Illustrate, or Recommend the Scripture; and how much a Greater number of Understanding and Sober Men, that never Publish'd Books, have Evinc'd the Scriptures Power over them, partly by their Sermons and other Discourses, Publick and Private, and partly by endeavouring to Conform their Lives to the Dictates of it: Which last Clause I add, because

cauſe You can ſcarce make a better Eſtimate of what Power the Scripture has upon Men, than by looking at what it is able to make them Part with. For not to Anticipate what we ſhall ere long have occaſion to mention, Let us but conſider what Numbers of Intelligent Perſons almoſt every Age, without excepting our own, (as degenerate as it is,) has produc'd, who have been Taught and Prevail'd with by the Scripture, and Conſiderations drawn thence, to Renounce all the greateſt ſinfull Pleaſures, and Imbrace a Courſe of Life that oftentimes expoſes them to the greateſt Dangers, and very frequently to no ſmall Hardſhips.

And indeed there is ſcarce any ſort of Men on which the Scripture has not had a Notable Influence, as to the Reforming and Improving many particular Perſons, belonging to it; and to the giving them an Affectionate Veneration for the Book, whereunto they owed their Inſtruction. The Accompts Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory gives us of the Rate at which Devout Perſons; both in former and latter Ages, would Purchaſe the Bible, when it was Dangerous and perhaps Capital, to be found poſ-

poſſeſs'd of it, would, if I ſhould here repeat them, much Confirm what I ſay, and might equally Create our Wonder and our Bluſhes, Thoſe ſorts of profeſs'd Chriſtians that ſeem the moſt Evidently to be lyable to Temptations to Neglect, or Diſregard the Scripture, are either thoſe that Do, or would paſs for Wits, or thoſe that live in Courts: The Former oftentimes thinking themſelves too Wiſe to be Taught, eſpecially by a Book they think not Eloquent, and among the Latter there being but too many whoſe Pleaſures are ſo Bewitching, or ſo Dear to them, that they like nothing that would Divert, much leſs Divorce them from their Purſuit, or elſe whoſe Buſineſs is ſo Much and perhaps ſo Important, that they have not Leiſure enough to Learn, or have too much Pride to think they need do it: But yet ev'n among thoſe, that have worn Crowns either of Gold or Bays, or (what perhaps ſome value above both) of Myrtle, the Bible has not wanted Votary's: For not to repeat the Names of thoſe whom I have formerly mention'd to have been as well Lovers of the Scripture, as Favorites of the Muſes, among the other

ſort

ſort of Men, *Thoſe that* (to ſpeak in ours Saviours Terms) *are Gorgeouſly Apparell'd, Live Delicately, and are in Kings Courts*, there have been Divers Perſons, upon whom the Power of the Scripture has been almoſt as Conſpicuous, as their Station among men. I will not mention that Devout Treaſurer of the *Æthiopian* Queen, who ev'n upon the High-way (whoſe Length neither Deterr'd nor Tir'd his Devotion) could not forbear to read the Prophet *Iſaiah*, and enquire ev'n of a Meer Stranger that paſs'd by Alone, and on Foot, the Meaning of a Paſſage of whoſe Senſe he Doubted. Nor will I Urge any other Inſtances of Great men's Studiouſneſs of the Scripture, afforded us by Sacred Story. And therefore I ſhall not preſs the Example of that Great and Wiſe *Daniel*, whoſe Matchleſs Parts not only caſt upon him the Higheſt Employment of the Worlds Monarchy, and Diſengag'd him from the Ruines of it: But (what has ſcarce a Preſident amongſt the very Wiſeſt Stateſ-men) Continu'd him in as much Greatneſs as ever he poſſeſs'd under the Predeceſſour, under

Luke 7. 25.

under the Succeſſor; and ſuch a Succeſſor too as made his Predeceſſors Carkaſs the Aſcent to his Throne; I will not I ſay at preſent Urge the Examples Extant in the Sacred Records of Great Mens Studiouſneſs of them, becauſe ev'n Secular and more Recent Hiſtories may inform us, that ev'n in Courts All mens Eyes have not been ſo Dazl'd by the Glittering Vanities that are wont to Abound there, but that *Some* of them have Diſcern'd, and Practically Acknowledged the Prerogatives of the *Scripture*. Though I cannot ſay that Many Kings have been of this Number, becauſe there have been but Few Kings in all, in reſpect of the Numbers that compoſe the Inferiour Conditions of Men, yet ev'n among Theſe, and in Degenerate Ages, ſome have been *Signally* ſtudious of the Bible, ſuch was that ſixth *Edward*, who Imitated the early active Piety of *Joaſh*, without Imitating his Defection from it, and whoſe *Short* Heavenly Life manifeſt, how ſoon, ev'n amidſt the Temptations of Courts, Grace can ripen Men for Glory; and ſuch was that Learned King, whoſe having more

King *James.*

than

then Perfunctorily ſtudy'd the Scripture, his ſolid Defence of Divers or it's Truths againſt it's Miſ-interpreters have ſufficiently Proclaim'd to the World. Nay, even in thoſe Darker times that preceded the Reformation, that Excellent *Aragonian* King, *Alphonſus*, the Honour both of his Title and his Times, in ſpite of his Contemplations and his Wars, could, (as himſelf us'd to Glory) ſpare Time from Studies and his Diſtractions, to read the Bible Forty times with Comments and Gloſſes on it: being not for all his Aſtronomy, ſo taken up with the Contemplation of Heaven, as to deny himſelf leiſure to Study in his Book that made it the Wayes of getting thither. Nor ſhall I forbear to mention here the Laſt Pope (*Urban* the eighth) who when being Cardinal, he wanted not the Hopes of becoming both Temporal and Eccleſiaſtical Lord of that Proud City, which (as if ſhe were deſign'd to be ſtill, one way or other, the World's Miſtreſs) doth ſtill rule little leſs of the World upon the ſcore of Religion, than ſhe did before upon that of Arms; in the midſt

of

of Affairs perhaps More Distracting than busy'd most Potentates, and Honours almost as Great as are pay'd to Monarchs, could find Room in a Head Crowded with Affairs enough to have Distress'd *Macchiavel*, for Reflections upon the Scripture; some of whose Portions I have Delighted to read in the handsom Paraphrases of his Pious Muse. Which I scruple not to acknowledge, because that though I did, which I do not, look upon every one that Dissents from me, as an Enemy; yet I should be apt to think that they can scarce Love Vertue enough, that Love it not in their very Enemies; congruously to which we find that *Hannibal* had Statutes Erected in *Rome* it self: and though I were so Uncharitable and so Unexperienc'd as to think a Man that holds an Error can scarce have any Good Qualities, yet upon such a kind of score as that which made *David* so Angry with him that took away the Poor Man's Single Lamb, the *Fewer* Commendable Quality's I see in my Adversaries, the more Scruple I would make to Rob them of any way of them. Nor hath that very Sex that so often

often makes Divertiſements it's Employments, been altogethe barren in Titled Votaries to the Scripture. Not to mention that *Grecian* Princeſs, whoſe Proſelyted Muſe made *Homer* turn Evangeliſt, how Converſant that Excellent Mother and Reſembling Daughter, *Paula* and *Euſtochium*, were in the Sacred Roles, is ſcarce unknown to any that are not Strangers to the Writings of St. *Hierome*; for ſome of whoſe Learned Comments on the Scripture, we are Endebted to the Charitable Importunity of their Requeſts. And even in Our Times, that ſo much Degenerate from the Primitive ones, how Eminent a Student and Happy a Proficient in the Study of the Bible, that Glory of Princeſſes, and the Envy of the Princes of her Time, Queen *Elizabeth*, was, her Life and Reign ſufficiently declare. Her Siſter's Predeceſſor, that Matchleſs *Lady Jane*, who had all the Qualities the Beſt Patriots could deſire in a Queen, but an Unqueſtionable Title, and in whoſe Sad Fate, beſides her Sex and the Graces that Enamour ours of it, her Countrey, Philoſophy, Virtue, and Religion, did all

Eudoxia, Wife to the Emperour *Theodoſius*.

all ſuſtain a Loſs, was a Conſpicuous Studier of the Inſpir'd Books; wherein her Proſpered Sedulouſneſs gave her an Underſtanding much above her Age and Sex, though not above her Vertue. And beſides *Eudoxia*, there have been divers other Perſons of the Higheſt Quality of that Sex, and ev'n ſome of thoſe on whom Nature or Fortune, or rather Beauty or Providence had conferr'd a Soveraignty, whom the Splendour, the Pleaſures, nor the Avocations of Courts could not keep from Searching in Gods Word Preſervatives againſt the Contagion of their Condition; and partly Hiſtory, and partly ev'n Converſation have ſometimes with Delight made me Obſerve, how ſome of thoſe Celebrated Ladies, whoſe Fatal Beauties have made ſo many Idolaters, have Devoutly turn'd thoſe Fair Eyes, that Were, and Did ſuch Wonders, upon thoſe Severe Writings that Depretiate all but the Beauty of the Soul, from thoſe Flattering Aſcriptions that Deify'd that of the Body. And 'tis not to be marvell'd at, that ſuch Readers as are not Infidels, by reading the Bible Once

ſhould be prevail'd with to read it Oftner, not only becauſe of the Inviting Excellency of what it Teaches, but becauſe its Author do's ſo Earneſtly in it Enjoyn the *Study* of it, that ſcarce any can think the Neglect of it no Fault, ſave thoſe that are Guilty of it. Nor is their ſo Aſſiduous Peruſal of the *Scripture* ſo much to be Marvell'd at, as Commended, in Perſons of that Softer Sex, which is perhaps more ſuſceptible than ours of Strong Impreſſions of Devotion. For ſure, if we Lov'd God, I do not ſay as we Ought to love HIM, but as we Can, and Do love Inferiour things, would hugely Endear the Scripture to us, that the Object of our Devotion is the Author of that Book. When a True Flame, though but for a Fading Object, doth once poſſeſs a Fervent Lover's Breaſt; what a Fondneſs doth his Paſsion for his Miſtriſs give him for all things Related to her? Her Reſidencies, her Walks, her Colours, and the leaſt Trifles that have belonged to her, Exact a Kindneſs that's not due to Trifles: though it be but for Preſenting to his Memory it's almoſt only Object, and refreſh-

ing him with an Ideal in the Abſence of an Immediater Preſence of her. But if the Favour'd Amoriſt be Bleſt with any Lines Dignified by that Fair Hand (give me leave to talk of Lovers in their own Language) eſpecially if they be Kind as well as Her's, how Aſſiduouſly, and with what Raptures do his greedy Eyes peruſe them, taſting each ſeveral Expreſſion with its own Tranſport; and finding in Each Line, at each New Reading, ſome New Delight or Excellency: This Welcom Letter grows ſooner Old than Stale; and all his two frequeut Kiſſes have worn it to Tatters, (in which he Preſerves it, if not Worſhips it too, as a Relique) with ſtill Freſh, and ſtill Inſatiate Avidities doth the unweary'd Lover prize that (too often, either Deluding or Inſignificant) Writing, above the Nobleſt Raptures of Poets, and Liberalleſt Patents of Princes, and (not to Urge the *Superſtitious* Devotion of our Worſhippers of Relicks) certainly if we had for God but Half as much Love as we Ought, or ev'n Pretend to have, we could not but Frequently (if not Tranſportedly) Entertain

tertain our ſelves with his Leaves, which (as Parrhelions to the Sun) are at once his Writings and his Picture: both Expreſſing his Vaſt and Unmerited Love to us; and Exhibiting the moſt Approaching or leaſt Unreſembling Idea of our Beloved, that the Deity hath fram'd for Mortals to apprehend. 'Twas the Devout Quarrel of a Devout Father to ſome of the choiceſt Compoſures Antiquity hath left us, that he could not find Chriſt Nam'd there, and if, as 'tis not to be Doubted, divers of the Devout Lady's I was Lately ſpeaking of, were of his Mind, ſure at that Rate they were not Ordinarily kind to the Scripture; where the Prophets and the Apoſtles, thoſe Darker and more Clear Evangeliſts, do ſo Unanimouſly and Aſſiduouſly Celebrate the *Meſsiah*, that when I Read and Confer them, I ſometimes Fancy my ſelf preſent at our Saviour's Triumphant Entrance into *Hieruſalem*, where both *Thoſe that went before him, and thoſe that follow'd after him, ſung Hoſannah to the Son of* David. Mat. 21. 9. Mark 11. 9.

——— Wherefore, ſince ev'n Great Wits, Great Princes, and Great Beauty's, have not ſtill by all thoſe

Temptations to which these Attributes Expos'd them, been kept from being also Great Votaries to the Scripture, it cannot Charitably be Doubted, but that in Most Ages some Pious Persons have been able to say Truly to God in Jerem. 15. 16. *Jeremy*'s Terms, *Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and thy Word was to me the Joy and Rejoycing of mine Heart:* and if the Persons I Mention have been but Few, I can attribute that Fewness but to the Paucity of Wise and Good Men; And as for Persons of other Ranks, in Ecclesiastical Stories, the Instances are not so Rare of the Addictedness of God's Children to his Word, but that we might thence produce them almost in Throngs, if we had not Nobler Inducements to the Reading of the Inspir'd Volume than Example: and if it were not Less to be Venerated, because so many Saints have Study'd it, as because the Study of it made many of those men *Saints*, (I mean not Nominal but Real ones:) which we need not much Wonder at, whilst such a *Saint* as *Saint Paul* was, 2 Tim. 3. 16. assures us, that it is All of it Divinely Inspir'd and Improveable to all

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the Uſes Requiſite to the Entire Accompliſhment of God's Servants. But *Theophilus*, to Return to what I was formerly Diſcourſing of, the Transforming Power the Scripture has upon many of its Readers, I muſt ſubjoyn, that though through the Goodneſs of God, theſe be farr more Numerous than the profeſſed Adverſaries and Contemners of the Scripture, yet theſe make not ſo Great a Part of thoſe that acknowledge the Bible, as it were well they did, becauſe both Experience and our Saviours Parable have ſufficiently taught us, that Good ſeed, do's not alwayes fall into Good ground, and that many Intervening Accidents may, after it has been ſown, make it Miſcarry and prove Fruitleſs: But when You find (as I fear You may but too often) that the Scripture has not upon its Readers, and Eſpecially upon thoſe that are Prophane, that Power which I ſeem'd to Aſcribe to it, and which it Ought to have; You may be pleas'd to Remember, that I plainly ſuppoſe in my fifth Anſwer, that thoſe to whom the Scripture is Addreſs'd, muſt not be Culpably Indiſpos'd to be

Wrought upon by it. Which that Prophane Perſons are, I preſume You will eaſily Grant; For when our Saviour ſaid, that *If any Man will do the Will of him that ſent him, he ſhall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God, or no:* He clearly Intimates, that there is requir'd a Diſpoſition as well in the Eye of his Soul, (if I may ſo ſpeak) as in the Object propos'd, to make a Man Diſcern the Excellency and Origination of what is Taught, how Valuable ſoever. Saint *Paul*, ſpeaking of himſelf and other Pen-men and Teachers of the Scriptures, affirms, that They *ſpeak Wiſdom among them that are Perfect*, (and though not this World's Wiſdome, Yet) *the Wiſdome of God in a Myſtery, even that Hidden one which God ordain'd before the World, unto our Glory.* But for theſe Scorners, 'tis no Wonder they ſo Fruitleſly Read the Scripture, without Deſcrying any of this Myſterious Wiſdome, it being a Sentence of the Scripture it ſelf, *that a Scorner ſeeketh Wiſdome, and [findeth it] not*, (the Expreſsion is Odd in the Original, but I muſt not ſtay to Deſcant upon it) as the *Sodomites* could not

John 7. 17.

1 Cor. 2. 7.

Prov. 14. 6.

not find the Angels, when once they sought them to Prostitute and Defile them. Gen. 19. 5. 11.

But Besides Prophane Wits, there are too many other Readers, who are (more or less) Guilty of Opposing the Reforming and Improving Influence of the Scripture, upon their own Hearts; either upon the Score of their not Sufficiently Believing the Truths Contain'd in the Scripture, or upon that of their not Duly Pondering them. That Unbelief is the Fruitful Mother of more Sins than are wont to be imputed to it, and that many Baptiz'd Persons are not free from greater Degrees of it, than they are Suspected of by others, or ev'n by themselves, I could here easily Manifest, if I had not professedly Discours'd of that Subject in another place. And indeed, there needs but a Comparing of most Men's Lives with the Promises and Threats held forth in the Scripture of no less than Everlasting Joyes and Endless Torments, to make us believe that there are Multitudes of Profes's'd Christians, to whom may be Apply'd what the Writer to the Hebrews sayes of

of the perverse Jewes of Old; *That what they heard did not profit them, not being mix'd with Faith in them that heard it*, or (as the Greek will bear) because they were not United by Faith to the things they heard. But this is not all, For oftentimes the Doctrines of the Scripture Lose much of their Efficacy, ev'n where they are Cordially believ'd, because they are not sufficiently Laid to Heart. The Disparity of the Influences of the Bare Belief and the Due Perpension of a Truth, is Methinks, Conspicuous enough in Men's Thoughts of Death. For though, That they shall Dye, is so Truly Believ'd, that it cannot Seriously be Doubted; Yet how doth Mens Inadvertency make them Live Here, as if they were to Do so Alwayes: whereas when once Grace, Sickness, the Sight of a Dying Friend, or some other Tragick Spectacle, hath Seriously minded them of Death, 'tis Amazing to Observe how strange an Alteration is produc'd in their Lives by the Active and Permanent Impression of that One Obvious and Unquestioned Truth, That those Lives must have a Period;

Heb 4. a.

and

and to ſee how much the Sober Thoughts of Death, contribute to Fit Men for it: it being ſo Imperious an Inducement to Deny Ungodly and Worldly Luſts, and to Live σωφρόνως καὶ δικαίως καὶ εὐσεβῶς ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι, *Soberly, Righteouſly, and Godly in this preſent World*, that we muſt one day Leave it; that I Admire not much that Father's Celebrated Strictneſs and Auſterity, who tells us, that he Fancy'd alwayes Sounding in his inward Ears, that Dreadful Alarum of, *Surgite Mortui & Venite ad Judicium.* Tit. 2. 12.

Yet Notwithſtanding the Indiſpoſition of many Readers to Reverence and Obey the Scripture, and Notwithſtanding that in Divers Paſſages of it, the Ornaments of Language are (for Reaſons above ſpecify'd) purpoſely Declin'd; Yet we find not, but that the Scripture for all theſe Diſadvantages, is by the Generality of its Readers, both Eſteem'd and Obey'd at another gueſs Rate, than any other Book of Ethicks or Devotion. And Multitudes ev'n of thoſe whoſe Paſſions, or Intereſts, will not ſuffer them to be in ſome Points Guided by it, are Not-

Notwithstanding Sway'd by it, to Forbear or Practise divers things in Cases wherein other Books would not Prevail with them. As *Herod*, though the Baptist could not perswade him to Quit his *Herodias*, did yet upon *John*'s Preaching do Many other things, and *heard him Gladly*, ——— I

Mark 12. 37.

was going to say, that we may not unfitly Apply to the Word of God, what Divines have Observ'd of God the Word; for as those Accidents that Loudliest Proclaim'd our Saviours having Assum'd our Human Nature and Infirmities, were attended with some Circumstances, that Conspicuously Attested his Divinity; so in those Passages in which the Majesty of the Authors Style is most veiled and Disguis'd, there is yet some Peculiarity that Discloses it. But I shall Less scruple to tell You, that in Divers of those Passages in which the Holy Ghost (who in the Greek Father's wonted Expression, does often Συγκαταβαίνειν ἡμῖν, stoop to our Capacity, and as it were, Sink himself down Level;) seems most to have Vouchsaf'd a Condescension to the Style of Men; and

to

to have Commanded his Secretaries, as he once did the Prophet *Eſay*, to Write, בחרט אנוש *Be-charet Enoſh*, *With a Mans Pen*; in divers of thoſe Very Places, I ſay, there is ſomething of ſo Awfull, and ſo Peculiarly His, that as the Sun, Ev'n when he Deſcends into the Weſt, remains ſtill Lucider than any of the Stars; ſo the Divine Inſpirer of the Scriptures, ev'n when his Style ſeems moſt to Stoop to our Capacities, doth yet Retain a Prerogative above meerly Human Writings. *Known unto God are all his Works from the Beginning of the World*, ſayes an Apoſtle; and God, whoſe Attribute is to be καρδιογνώστης, *The Knower of Hearts*, and whoſe Prerogative 'tis to *Form the Spirit of Man within him*, *Underſtandeth our Thoughts afar off*. Certainly then, if we Conſider God as the Creator of our Souls, and ſo likelieſt to Know, the Frame, and Springs, and Nature of his own Workmanſhip; we ſhall make but little Difficulty to Believe that in the Book Writen For, and Addreſs'd To Men, he hath Employ'd very Powerfull and Appropriated Means to Work upon them.

Iſa. 8. 1.

Acts 15. 18.

Acts 1. 24.

Zech. 12. 1.

Pſal. 139. 2.

them. And in Effect, there is a ſtrange Movingneſs, and, if the Epithet be not too Bold, a kind of Heav'nly Magick to be found in ſome Paſſages of the Scripture, which is to be found no where elſe; and will not eaſily be Better Expreſt than in the Proper Terms of the Scripture; *For the Word of God*, (ſayes It) *is Quick and Powerfull, and Sharper than any Two-edged Sword, piercing even to the Dividing aſunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joynts and Marrow, and is a Diſcerner of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart.* Wherefore, that *Junius*, (as Himſelf Relates) was Converted from a kind of Atheiſt to a Believer, upon the Reading of the Firſt Chapter of *John*: that a Rabbi, by his Own Confeſſion, was Converted from a Jew to a Chriſtian, by the Reading of the Fifty third of *Eſay*; that Saint *Auſtin* was chang'd from a *Debauche* into a Saint, by that Paſſage of the 13th to the *Romans* and the 13th Verſe; and that another Father, whoſe Fear had made him Diſclaim his Faith, burſt out publickly into a Showr of Tears, upon the Occaſional Reading of the 16th Verſe

Heb. 4. 12.

of

of the Fiftieth *Pſalm*; are Effects, that I do not ſo much Admire, as I do that Such are Produc'd no Oftner. And truly for my own Part, the Reading of the Scripture hath Mov'd me more, and Sway'd me more Powerfully to all the Paſſions it would Infuſe, than the Wittieſt and Eloquenteſt Compoſures that are Extant in our Own and ſome other Languages. Nay, ſo Winning is the Majeſty of the Scripture, that many (like thoſe that fall in Love in Earneſt with the Ladies they firſt Courted, but out of (what the French call) Gallantry;) who began to Read it out of Curioſity, have found themſelves Engag'd to Continue that Exerciſe out of Conſcience: and not a few of thoſe, that did at firſt Read the New Teſtament onely to Learn ſome Unknown Language it is Tranſlated into, or for ſome ſuch Trivial Purpoſe, have been by the Means that they Elected, carried beyond the End that they Deſign'd, and met a Deſtiny not ill Reſembling that of *Zacheus*; who Climbing up into a Sycamore Growing in our Saviour's Way, only to Look upon Him, paſs'd thence to be his Proſelyte and Convert;

Luke 19. à v. 1. ad v. 10.

Mat. 13. 19, 20, &c. Convert; and to Entertain him Joyfully, both in his Houſe and Heaat. And though it be true that the Churches Teſtimony be commonly our Firſt, yet 'tis not alwayes our Chief Inducement to believe the Divinity of Holy Writ; it's own Native Prerogatives Heightning that into Faith, which the Churches Authority left but Opinion. To which purpoſe I Remember a Handſome Obſervation of ſome of the Antients; that the *Samaritans* that Firſt Believ'd in Chriſt upon the Womans Report, when afterwards they were Bleſſed with an Immediate Converſation with himſelf, they Exultingly told the Woman, John 4. 39--42. *Now we believe, not becauſe of thy Saying; for we have heard him our ſelves, and know that this is indeed the Chriſt, the Saviour of the World*: for ſo, Diverſe that firſt Believ'd the Scripture but upon the Churches ſcore; are afterwards by Acquaintedneſs brought to Believe the Scripture upon its Own ſcore, that is, by the Diſcovery of thoſe Intrinſick Excellencies and Prerogatives that manifeſt its Heav'nly Origination. ——— This ſacred

cred Book, ev'n where it hath not Embelliſhments of Language, doth not Want them: being ſo much Recommended by its Imperious Perſwaſiveneſs Without them, that it is more Ennobl'd by their Needleſsneſs, than it would be, by their Affluence. And if to ſome Paſſages of Scripture, we muſt Apply that of Saint *Paul*, (whereby yet he thought to Recommend his Miniſtry to the *Corinthians*) *That his Speech and his Preaching was not with the Enticing Words of Man's Wiſdome*, but ἐν ἀποδείξει πνεύματος καὶ δυνάμεως, we may alſo Remember, that he ſubjoyns as the Reaſon that mov'd him to uſe this Plain and Unadorn'd Way of Teaching his *Corinthians*, *That their Faith might not ſtand in the Wiſdome of Men, but in the Power of God.* And truly the Efficacy and Operations of the Bible, in Compariſon of thoſe of all other Books, Duly conſider'd, we may eſteem, that as God oftentimes doth in the Scripture, what in the Scripture he is ſaid to Do, *Draw us with the Cords of a Man*, (Paſſages Wreath'd with Flowers of Rhetorick)

1 Cor. 2. 1--4.

Verſe 5.

rick) ſo is it not Unfit, that he ſhould ſometimes Employ Expreſſions, that Carrying away our Obedience, our Reverence, and our Aſſent in ſpite of our Indiſpoſitions to them, might Manifeſt their Derivation from him, who is not Ty'd to ſuch Means as Men would think Neceſſary, but can compaſs his Ends as well By as Without any: Nor can I often Conſider the Inſtances Experience affords us of the Efficacy of many Texts, (which ſome that Pretend to Eloquence accuſe of having None) without ſometimes calling to mind, how in the Book of Nature God has Veil'd in an Obſcure and Homely Stone an Attractiveneſs (Unvouchſaf'd to Diamonds and Rubies) which the Stubborneſt of Metals do's Obſequiouſly acknowledge. And as the Load-ſtone not onely Draws what the ſparkling'ſt Jewels can not move, but Draws ſtronglier, where Arm'd with Iron, than Crown'd with Silver: ſo the Scripture, not onely is Movinger than the Glitteringſt Human Styles, but hath oftentimes a Potenter Influence on Men in thoſe Paſſages that ſeem quite

Deſtitute

Deſtitute of Ornaments, than in thoſe where Rhetorick is Conſpicuous.

I ſhould now, *Theophilus*, immediately Paſs on to the other things I am to Diſcourſe to You of, concerning the Scripture, but that the Curioſity wherewith You are wont to take Notice of my Practices, and to make Enquiries after my Private Opinions, makes me Imagine, You telling me, that I do often Read, and do much oftner Commend Books of Devotion, Notwithſtanding all the Prerogatives I have Attributed to the Scripture; Wherefore to this I ſhall Anſwer, that I Eſteem indeed the Truths of Scripture, ſo Important and Valuable, that I cannot be Troubl'd to ſee them Preſented to us in Variety of Dreſſes, that we may the more Frequently and the more Attentively take Notice of them. And though ſome Devout Compoſures are ſo Unskilfully Written, as to be much Fitter to Expreſs the Devotion of the Writer, than to Excite it in the Reader, yet there are others ſo Handſomely, and ſo Pathetically Pen'd,

The Concluſion of one Part of the Diſcourſe concerning the Scripture and the Tranſition to the Next.

that a Good Man can ſcarce Read them without Growing Better, and ev'n a Bad Man muſt be very Much ſo, without becomming Leſs ſo by Peruſing them. Nor do I at all Deſign to Diſparage Books of Devotion, when I Preferr the Scripture to them, that being ſo Noble and Matchleſs a Work, that a Book may Attain to a High Degree of Excellence, whilſt it Remains Inferiour to the Scripture, of whoſe Preheminencies I have already on ſeveral Occaſions Nam'd Divers to You; And therefore ſhall at preſent onely Recommend to Your Obſervation this one Advantage of the Scripture, ev'n as to thoſe things that are alſo to be met with in other Books of Devotion. That if *the Words of the Wiſe be* (as *Solomon* tells us they are) *like Nails faſtned by the Maſters of the Aſſemblies*, the ſelf ſame Nail muſt enter Leſs or Deeper according to the Strength of the hand that Drives it in; And Doubtleſs, any Doctrine Believ'd to come from God, in the ſame Terms it is Deliver'd to us, is like to be Entertain'd with a Deeper and Obſequiouſer Reſpect,

Eccle. 12. 11.

ſpect, Concurrently whereunto, the Apoſtle to ſet forth the Theſſalonians Reception of the Goſpel, Sayes, *That they receiv'd it not as the Word of* Men, but *(as it is in Truth)* the *Word of God.* After which it is no Wonder he could immediately ſubjoyn, that *It did alſo effectually work in them that Believed.* And though it be very true that the Forreigneſs and Obſcurity of ſome Texts will Require as well as the Teeming Richneſs of others will Bear, their being Alledg'd in Words much more Numerous than thoſe whoſe Involv'd or Contracted Senſes they are to Diſplay, Yet is it alſo as True, that Men do not unfrequently Miſtake themſelves in thinking to Deliver the Holy Ghoſt's Conceptions in Fitter Terms than his Own, the proper Preciſe Expreſſions of Scripture being oftentimes ſo Pathetical and Sinewy, that he that Stretches them, Enervates them, and Paraphraſes, though Handſome, do as much Wrong them, as a Mixture of Silver, though no Ignoble Metal, does Wrong an Ingot of Gold. And though ſome Texts like Pearls Loſe indeed of their

1 Theſſ. 2. 13.

Beauty, but Operate, and are Administer'd more Successfully Beaten to Powder, or with other Cordial Ingredients made up into a Confection, yet divers Sacred Expressions do like Diamonds Lose both their Sparkling Lustre, and Engraving Faculty, when ground to Dust, and lose more in their Entireness and Form than can be Recompenc'd by any Addition. And truly, as to my Own particular, no Book of Devotion doth Constantly Affect me so Powerfully as the Bible. And whereas I am of so Nice a Palate, that in my Esteem Composures of that Kind still Lose at the Second Reading, in the Inspired Volume, Familiarity breeds not Contempt but Reverence (and I Like a Book, Acquaintance still Endears.) When I first began Attentively to Read the Scripture, and (according to my Custom when I Read Books, whereof I have a Promising Expectation) to Mark in the Margin the Passages that seem'd to Deserve a Peculiar Notice or Reflection, I mark'd but here and there some Verses in a Chapter, but when upon a Greater Familiarity with the Idiotisms, the Sense,

and

and the Applicableneſs of Scripture I came to Reſurvey it, I then in ſome places Mark'd the Whole Chapter, and in Moſt others left much Fewer Texts than before Unfurniſh'd with ſome Mark of Reference. And whereas at my Entrance I took even the Choiceſt part of the Bible to be at Beſt but like ſome *Indian* Province, wherein though Mines and Gems were more Abundant than in Other Countreys, yet they were but Sparingly to be met here and there: after a Competent Stay my Enſuing Peruſals Preſented it me, if not as a Royal Jewel made up of Gold and Precious Stones, yet (which is Glorioufer) like *Aaron*'s Breaſt-plate, a Sacred Jewel, the Particular Inſtructions for which were given by God himſelf, and which, beſides the Various Number of flaming Gems ſet in fine Gold, and plac'd in a Myſterious Order, was Ennobl'd by that *Urim* and *Thummim*, wherein God vouchſaf'd to Reveal himſelf to Mortals, and was Adorn'd with ſo much cunning Work in Gold, Blue, Purple, Scarlet and fine Twin'd Linnen, that the Contrivance and Workmanſhip lent

lent a Luſtre to the Glittering Materials, without being Obſcur'd by them. This Experiment keeps me from Wondring to find in the Inſpired Poets Deſcription of the Man he Attributes a Bleſſedneſs to, that his *Chaphatz* is in the *Law of the Lord, and in his Law will he Meditate day and night.* For the Word other Tranſlations render *Voluntas & Studium*, our's Engliſhes Delight, an indeed the Hebrew חפץ will bear both Senſes, and ſeems there Emphatically to ſignifie a Study repleniſh'd with ſo much Delight to the Devout and Intelligent Proſecutors of it, that like the *Hallelujahs* of the Bleſſed 'tis at once a Duty and a Pleaſure, an Exerciſe and a Recompence of Piety. And indeed, if Gods Bleſſing upon the Devout Chriſtian's Study of that Book do (according to the Pſalmiſts Prayer) *upon his Eyes to diſcern the* נפלאות *Niplaot, Hidden Wonders* contain'd in it, He ſhould, in Imitation of him that in the ſame Pſalm ſayes of his God, I *rejoyce at thy Word, as one that findeth great ſpoil*, be as Satisfy'd as Navigators that Diſcover Unknown Countreys. And I muſt

Pſalm 1. 2.

Pſal. 119. 18.

Verſ. 162.

muſt confeſs, that when ſometimes with the Apoſtles in the Mount, I Contemplate *Moſes* and *Elias* Talking with Chriſt, I mean the Law and Prophets Symphonizing with the Goſpel, I cannot but (Reſemblingly Tranſported with a like Motive) Exclaim with *Peter*, *It is good for me to be here*, and ceaſe to think the Pſalmiſt an Hyperboliſt, for comparing the Tranſcendent Sweetneſs of Gods Word to that Inferiour one) of Honey, which is Like it, in nothing more, than in that, of both their Suavities, Experience gives much Advantageouſer Notions than Deſcriptions can. Mat. 17. verſ. 4. Pſal. 119. verſ. 103.

But *Theophilus*, upon Condition You will not call this Excurſion of Your Own occaſioning a Fit of Devotion, I will no longer Detain You on one Subject, but forthwith Proceed to Diſcourſe of thoſe Other things that I am to conſider in the Scripture beſides the Style For though this be Such as I have been Repreſenting it, yet I hope we ſhall in our Progreſs find, that 'twill be far leſs Fit to Apply to this Matchleſs Book that of the Heathen Poet,

Materiam

Materiam superabat Opus ——

Than that Sacred one of the Psalmist, where he as well sayes that *the Kings Daughter is all Glorious within*, as that *Her Cloathing is of wrought Gold.*

Psalm 45. 13.

FINIS.